THE WONDERFUL FLOWER OF WOXINDON

JOSEPH SPILLMANN, S.J.

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THE

Wonderful Flower of Woxindon.

An Historical Romance of the Time of Queen Elizabeth.

BY THE

REVEREND JOSEPH SPILLMANN, S. J.

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PREFACE.

THE following narrative is an historical romance, not a pure work of fiction. The events recorded are true, and careful, thorough research has been bestowed on them to ensure historical accuracy; and if in the colouring of the scenes, the bye-play of the drama, imagination has had a part, it has only been with the object of placing the truth of facts more vividly before the reader.

The subject chosen is in itself one which cannot fail to be attractive and interesting. Babington's ill-fated conspiracy, which was the means of bringing Mary Stuart to the scaffold, and thus crushing the hopes of English Catholics in the 16th century, forms the background of the whole, and no pains have been spared to render the account given of it as ample and as historically true as possible. Thus the title: "Babington's Conspiracy" would perhaps be as suitable as any other for the work.

The principal authority from which the facts are drawn is the Protestant historian John Hosack, in his work, *Mary Queen of Scots and her Accusers*. In contradistinction to Froude's flagrant misrepresentations, he unsparingly exposes the barbarous statecraft of which the guiltless Queen of Scots was

the victim. His chief merit is that of having proved convincingly, that the correspondence between Mary Stuart and Babington, on which the accusation alone rested, was a palpable forgery. That the chief acts, as well as the chief actors are correctly portrayed, may be seen by referring to the authors quoted. The character of "the Virgin Queen" and the unedifying dissensions of the various Protestant sects, have only been touched on lightly, for obvious reasons.

The fortunes of an old Catholic family, whose members, by no fault of their own, were involved in Babington's ill-advised enterprise, hold a prominent place in the narrative. Only in a few, unimportant details, has the author permitted himself to deviate from the account given in *The Troubles of our Catholic Forefathers*, edited by Father John Morris, S. J. (Series II, p. 44 seq.)

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The Wonderful Flower of Woxindon.

CHAPTER I.

Prologue, in which the reader is informed how it came to pass that the following history was written, at the express desire of her Imperial Highness, the Archduchess Isabella Clara Eugenia, and he is introduced to the three persons who act as narrators.

It is the custom of musicians, when they are about to execute some melodious symphony, to commence with an introduction or prelude, to dispose the mind of their audience, whether by the sound of trumpet and drum, or with the gentler strains of flute and violin, for the leading air, which will recur with runs and variations ever and anon throughout the composition. Orators and preachers too, say a few words to introduce their subject, and even the hardheaded philosopher does the same. It is not my intention to deviate from such excellent examples, therefore I will prefix a few suitable explanatory remarks to the sorrowful, but true history which I shall record in these pages, in obedience to the desire of my most gracious mistress, her Imperial Highness Isabella Clara Eugenia, the consort of our Stadtholder. And the task shall be performed to the best of my ability, according to the canons of art, that no one may apply to me the words of Virgil: *Rusticus es Corydon!* Thou art country-bred, O Corydon!

Full well do I remember the day on which the Archduchess enjoined on me to undertake the work. It was one day last May, when, with Mary, my dear wife, I had the honour of accompanying her Imperial Highness, as was our wont, from the Castle at Tervueren to the monastery of the Capuchin Fathers which she had erected, and to whose chapel she went almost daily, when the Court was moved from the neighbouring town of Brussels to our little hermitage in the wood.

On the day in question our diurnal pilgrimage had to be postponed until a late hour in the afternoon, because about noon, a heavy storm, with thunder and lightning, broke over Tervueren. I am thankful to say nothing was struck by the lightning, nor were the crops, which had just come into ear, beaten down by the hail, although a few large hailstones fell, and the aspect of the sky led one to fear much damage might be done. The blest bells of the parish church were duly rung by the sexton, and the little bell of our St. Hubert's chapel chimed in amid the roll of the thunder, like the voice of a little child raised in prayer. Thus we were protected by the power the Church possesses over the spirits of evil, as the old proverb says: *fulgura frango.*

Towards evening, the wind having driven away the clouds, the rays of the setting sun shone out brightly, and the varied hues of a beautiful rainbow appeared upon the arch of heaven. The Archduchess, who is well read in the classics, recalled to mind the lines:

Irim de coelo misit Saturnia Juno.

Only this time it was not the pagan goddess Juno, who sent this token of peace to the dwellers on earth, but the glorious Queen of Heaven, invoked by Christians in the hour of danger.

Quae picturato coelum distinguit amictu
Ingentemque fuga secuit sub nubibus arcum.

Which lights up the heavens with her many-coloured robe,
And spreads her vast bow beneath the clouds in their flight.

In a little while we stood in an oriel window of the Castle, admiring the bow which God set in the heavens as a pledge of His mercy to Noe, when my gracious mistress remarked that the storm had passed over towards Louvain. "In a few minutes the rain will cease," she said. "Then we can pay our accustomed visit to Our Lady of Dolours in the chapel of the Capuchin Fathers; it is only right to return thanks for the protection we have experienced." She then called for her cloak, which was similar in shape to those worn by the *Béguines*, and we three went down the stairs, followed by two maid servants. In addition to these attendants, the captain of the guard, Count Robiano, a Milanese, who had come to the Netherlands in the suite of the Prince of Parma, a good and prudent man, ordered two pikesmen of the guard to accompany us, as there were a good many tramps about in the wood through which our way led us.

After a short prayer in the chapel of St. Hubert, attached to the Castle, the Archduchess began to recite the Rosary, as was her custom, while we and the two maids, answered the responses, as we

walked along the path by the side of the large pond, leading to the beechwood. The foliage had to some extent suffered from the recent storm; here and there a few sprigs of tender green leaves lay in our way, and some drops were now and again showered down on us, as the wind shook the overhanging branches. My lady paid no heed to this but continued to say her beads aloud, while in the copse on either side the little birds trilled their evening lay as joyously as if no storm had ever disturbed the tranquility of their happy state, and the spring flowers emitted their delicious fragrance. As we recited the glorious mysteries who but must raise his heart in prayer to our risen Lord and His glorious Mother, that after all the changes and troubles of this stormy life, we might be taken up to the everlasting peace of their kingdom above. On reaching the end of the beech walk, where the path slopes downward through the pinewood to the valley below, we heard the bell of the Capuchin monastery close by ringing for vespers. Thus we arrived just at the right moment to join in the simple but devotional service of the Fathers.

When vespers were ended, we went as usual into the monastery garden, which the Archduchess, as a member of the Imperial House, had received permission from the Pope to enter whenever she wish, together with all her suite. There we seated ourselves beneath a spreading oak, and my old friend and fellow countryman, Brother Anselm, brought us fresh milk in wooden bowls, and slices of home-baked bread with delicious butter. Having

set this refreshment before us, he was about to withdraw, with a deep obeisance, for his humble manner betrayed to no one that he was a son of the noble family of St. Barbe. But this her Imperial Highness would not permit, she made him sit down upon the bench beside the Father Guardian, while she began to converse about England, my unhappy country, where under king James, Catholic priests were still cruelly butchered for the Faith. In that year of which I speak, the year of Grace 1616, no less than five priests had been put to death, although the persecution was somewhat less violent than in the days of his predecessor on the throne. At the solicitation of the Archduchess Brother Anselm, with the permission of Father Guardian, related some reminiscences of his uncle, Sir Francis Walsingham (of unblest memory) telling us of the snares spread by that famous politician for the Queen of Scots, snares craftily and cruelly woven, in which, as will presently be seen, not only that illustrious Princess was entrapped, but a considerable number of my best friends were taken. In fact it was only by a hair's-breadth that I myself and my wife escaped falling into his toils. Brother Anselm interested us all so much in his narrative that we remained sitting under the oak until the monastery bell rang for compline; when her Imperial Highness instantly rose, and taking leave in the most gracious manner of the two monks, invited them both to visit her at an early hour on the morrow at the Castle, as she had a proposal to make to them. I did not know at the moment to what she referred, but I was destined soon to learn.

When, on our homeward way, we emerged from the forest and came out into the meadows, the scene which met our view was one which I have seldom seen equalled in splendour. The sun was just setting behind the hills of Cortenbergh, and masses of cloud, driven by the wind into fantastic forms, glowed crimson and gold in the evening light, while the tender green of the wood was tinged with that peculiar roseate hue than which nothing more lovely can be imagined. The Archduchess, who had hitherto been walking along in silence, stood still to gaze on the beauteous spectacle, manifesting to man God's power and greatness. At that moment the Angelus rang out from the church tower, and we all devoutly repeated the angelical salutation. As the sound of the bell died away, one of the many nightingales which each year make the wood melodious with their music, began its evening song. Knowing that her Highness had a fancy for classical allusions, I was on the point of quoting the lines:

Qualis populea moerens Philomela sub umbra,
As in the shade of the poplars Philomel pours
forth her plaintive note,

when she turned to me unexpectedly and addressed me in the following words:

"Do you know, my dear Windsor, what I have been thinking of whilst walking through the silent wood, and contemplating this beautiful sunset? Perhaps it is hardly fair to make you guess. I have been thinking of you, and your dear wife, and good Brother Anselm. It seems to me this day may be taken as typical of your life; the

morning, one of chequered sunshine and shade, followed by a fearful tempest with thunder and lightning, which wrought sad havoc, but which passed over your heads, leaving you, by God's mercy, comparatively unscathed, and even bringing happiness and blessing in its train, and when the fury of the storm had subsided, it gave place to a fair and peaceful eventide, so that you can truly say: *post nubila Phoebus;* when the clouds have passed the sun shines forth."

Thereupon I respectfully kissed my patroness' hand, and replied that the comparison she had just made did equal credit to her qualities of heart and of head, and that a rhymster was wanted to clothe in verse so poetic an idea. It was indeed true that a cruel storm had overclouded the bright prospect of our early lives, and threatened to destroy them before they came to maturity. And if the evening of our lives was sweet and calm, like the quiet hours of the day now declining, it was exclusively due, under God, to the kindness of our illustrious mistress. Thus I could say with the shepherd Tityrus: *Deus nobis haec otia fecit*; the allmerciful God had granted us this time of rest before the grave, that we might close our days in tranquility and freedom from care.

The Archduchess smiled pleasantly, and said she thought the leisure I enjoyed was hardly as complete as that of the individual to whom I compared myself, who had nothing to do but blow his shepherd's pipe to his heart's content. If my duties as Court physician were light, owing to her excellent health, my

post of secretary was by no means a sinecure. And she was just going to propose that I should undertake a work, which would require many days and weeks for its completion. The idea that had suggested itself to her was this. My good wife, Brother Anselm and I myself, had from time to time, either when gathered round the hearth on the long winter evenings, or whilst seated under the shady oak in the monastery garden, related to her tales of the awful persecution that had overwhelmed us in England, and of the wonderful flower that blossomed at Woxindon, now it was her great desire to have these narratives, which were told in a fragmentary manner and by word of mouth, committed to writing, in consecutive order, and so as to form a complete whole. She desired moreover, that if I consented to undertake this labour of love, I should trim my pen and set to work the very next day, with the help of God; because during my sojourn in Tervueren I should have far more leisure and quiet for my task than whilst resident in Brussels.

When I perceived what was the drift of all the Archduchess' prettily turned speeches, I tried to make my escape out of the net she had laid for me, but it was already too late, I was compelled to yield to her wishes. This I did the more readily, because she brought cogent reasons to bear on me, as for instance, that it was incumbent on me to write this record of the past, — called *mémoires* by the French — not alone for my own sake, but to clear the memory of my friends, above all the unhappy

Queen of Scots, who had been unjustly put to death, and against whom the enemies of Holy Church had invented and published many slanderous stories. My wife too, threw her influence into the same scale, so that, had not gratitude to my patroness been a sufficient motive to actuate me, I should have taken up my pen for the sake of domestic peace, for Mary knows how to make me repent if I deny her any reasonable request.

Whilst walking home down the hill, therefore, we discussed the manner, in which the plan could best be carried out. The Archduchess said that as our respective narratives would mutually complete one another, we three, Brother Anselm, my wife and myself, should meet together and severally narrate the story of the events in chronological order, as they took place. It was with this object that she had invited the Capuchin Brother to come up to the Castle with Father Guardian on the morrow. After our conferences it was to be my part, for as much as Providence had gifted me with a good memory and a rapid pen, to commit to paper what had been related, and at the next meeting to read it over, for correction and amplification. After that it should be neatly transcribed in an elegant book, which she would order from Brussels.

This arrangement was accordingly carried out, only as Father Guardian was of opinion that it would be out of keeping with the simplicity of the Rule for a Capuchin to be a daily visitor at the Court, our conferences were for the most part held at the neighbouring seat of Count Robiano, who

kindly placed at our disposal a room opening into the grounds of the mansion. There, or when the weather permitted, sitting under the beeches and elms of the meadow adjoining the garden, and not far from the monastery, we reciprocally related our respective reminiscences, almost exactly as they are transcribed in the following pages.

It appeared to me, recalling the comparison made by the Archduchess between my day of life and the day then drawing to its close, that an account of that day, the one on which I received the commission to write this history, would form the fittest prologue or introduction to my narrative. I have therefore laid it before the reader. I shall now turn from the present, from the peaceful repose of a quiet country life, and think myself back into the troubled past, the scenes of strife and bloodshed of some thirty years ago, amid which may Providence be my guide!

CHAPTER II.

An account is given by my wife of Woxindon and of the wonderful flower; also of a guest about whom there will be much to tell later on.

It is exactly thirty years ago this spring, that the wonderful flower, which my dear grandmother imagined to be a portend of happiness to us, nay even of a revival of religion in this land, blossomed in my parents' house. Alas! that flower, far from being a harbinger of joy, was the forerunner of ruin to our house, and of a fierce outburst of persecution against our holy Faith. But perhaps if it brought sorrow here, it brought the promise of felicity hereafter.

Before telling the story of this flower, I must say a few words about our dear old home. It was an estate called Woxindon, not far from Harrow-on-the-hill, about twelve miles from London; somewhat farther, that is, than our own Tervueren is from Brussels, and separated from it by a wood, St. John's Wood, just as we are shut off from the capital by the forest of Audreghem. From our watchtower we could look over the tops of the trees and descry the gray walls and gloomy turrets of the Tower on the other side of the city. Whenever wind and weather permitted, my dear grandmother, leaning on my sister Anne's arm or on mine, used to ascend the winding stairs leading to the flat roof of the turret. There, looking across to the Tower in the far distance, we would kneel

down and recite a prayer for the many Catholics and Priests, venerated Confessors of the Faith, who were immured in its darksome dungeons. There were always about fifty there; with a large proportion of these we were personally acquainted, for Woxindon was known to friend and foe, as the principal place of refuge for priests in the neighbourhood of London, in fact in the south of England. Seldom did a month pass without one receiving a domiciliary visit, generally at night, from Topcliffe and his myrmidons, who turned the castle upside-down, pulled down partitions and broke through walls, only to go away at last, cursing and swearing at the futility of their quest.

Topcliffe was a thoroughly low, bad man, a Puritan in whose veins ran adders' poison; possessed not by one, but by a legion of devils breathing hatred against the Papacy. The mere sight of him made me shudder; not so my lighthearted sister Anne, who mocked and derided him, although my father repeatedly forbade her to do so. At the close of one of his fruitless searches she came forward and courtesied low, asking sarcastically when we might expect the great pleasure of another visit from his Honour, the Chief Master-Jailer? She would be glad to know, in order that some fitting preparation might be made to receive him, by the erection of a triumphal arch, something in the form of a gallows, perhaps. Thereupon Topcliffe cast a vicious glance, like a poisoned arrow, at the girl, saying: "You will not have much cause to rejoice, my young lady, when I come again. I hope ere long, with the help of

God, to wed you and a good many more inmates of this pestilential den to the hangman's rope."

Such was the cruel threat he flung at us as he rode off with his followers. And, sad to relate, the very next time he succeeded in capturing Father Thompson, or Blackburn (the name of his native town under which he sometimes passed) as he stood vested at the altar, delivering a stirring discourse upon the Holy Souls, for it was All Souls' Day, 1585. At the time we could not conceive how Topcliffe had contrived to surprise us; later on we discovered, to our sorrow, that a wretched traitor had given him a sign, by means of a cloth hung out of a window, and had also left a side door unbolted, so that the pursuivants were in the house, before the priest could slip into his cleverly contrived hiding place. You should only have heard the cries and lamentations of us women on the one hand, and on the other the mocking laughter of those devilish bloodhounds, as they pounced upon their prey. My father happened to be absent just then, so the sheriff's officer took my uncle Robert, the supposed master of the house, away to prison with the good priest, who gave us his blessing as he went, though his hands were tied together. My sister Anne made no courtesies and no mocking speeches this time.

From that day forth our grandmother went more often than ever to the top of the watchtower to pray and look towards the Tower of London, where the good priest was imprisoned, and Newgate, where her son Robert languished in confinement. And, truth to tell, I must confess that to

my youthful impatience her prayers seemed terribly long. My eyes used to follow the wide bend of the Thames, as it flows by Whitehall, Westminster with its desolated abbey, Chelsea and Putney, where the river looses itself amongst the green hills in the west. Beautiful Woxindon! the beloved scene where my happy youth was spent! How picturesque the little village of Harrow, and the little church with its ivy-clad walls and tower, looked nestling on the gentle slope of the hill opposite to the castle! There the ancestors of our race were interred, from Godelac, who received Woxindon in fief from Richard II, down to my grandfather, who died before the end of the reign of Queen Mary, by the Puritans called *Bloody* (a name befitting far better her sister Elizabeth). He was laid solemnly to rest in consecrated ground; the last of the Bellamys, alas! who will have this final consolation, in England, at least. For when my dear mother died, six years ago, we buried her in our garden. Far, far away over the hills one saw the fertile, undulating plains of Middlesex, dotted about with farms and hamlets innumerable, with noblemen's seats, towns and villages, woods and meadows, stretching away until even my sharp eyes could no longer distinguish them in the blue haze of the horizon. In the East, St. John's Wood shut off the prospect. Among the green tree-tops, at no great distance, rose the so called "Old Castle". This was a huge ruined stronghold, formerly the residence of our ancestors, until it was destroyed in the Wars of the Roses,

and Woxindon was built on a more accessible spot. Not only on the east side did the lofty beeches and oaks reach almost to the walls of our garden, but on the south and west also. Our grounds, with their shady walks, neatly trimmed yew-hedges, verdant lawns, gravelled paths, fountains and terraces bespoke both the wealth and the taste of their owner. The Bellamys of Woxindon always ranked among the richest landed proprietors of Middlesex aristocracy. [1])

How happy our life might have been in the stately manor house of our beautiful estate, had it not been for the cruel persecution, which, increasing in ferocity from year to year, hung like a black cloud over its towers and smiling gardens. Already father found it almost impossible to pay the enormous fines imposed by Parliament, not merely for hearing mass, but for non-attendance at the Protestant service. These were increased nearly every year, and really amounted to hundreds, even thousands of pounds. To meet these demands, one piece of land after another had to be mortgaged or sold to the Pages, my grandmother's nephews, who, for the sake of temporal advantage, acting against their conviction and conscience, had conformed to the new religion. This gave my father much sorrow and anxiety, insomuch that he repeatedly asked different priests, whether, in order to avert the ruin

1) For an account of this family *vide* Troubles of Our Catholic Forefathers, edited by Fr. J. Morris, Series II, p. 44, seq.

of the whole family, it was not permissible occasionally to assist at the Anglican sermons, thus conforming outwardly whilst still protesting inwardly. But every conscientious priest made the same reply, that such a thing could not be sanctioned by any means, since to be present at the Anglican service was considered by our antagonists as a sign of apostasy from the Catholic faith. His pious mother, too, entreated him rather to sacrifice his property to the last farthing, than be false to his creed. Thereupon he called us all together one day in the upper room which was used as an oratory, and explained to us clearly the state of the circumstances. He then bade us on the following morning, after due deliberation and earnest prayer, give him our opinion as to what course ought to be pursued.

This we did, and the result was that all unanimously declared they would rather, like good Lady Tregian, who was then under our roof, beg their bread from door to door throughout the length and breadth of the land, aye, and in foreign lands, too, than even outwardly and in appearance only forsake and deny the Holy Roman Catholic and Apostolic Church. The example of the good old Eleazar in the time of the Machabees, who preferred to die a cruel death sooner than even seem to have transgressed the law of God, was set before us by our good Bartholomew, (or Barty, as we called him for brevity's sake). He was a child-like, simple soul, whom the country people termed silly, but who certainly was wise in the sight of God. He related this history from Holy Scripture

with pious fervour; it was the longest speech I ever heard from his lips, and touched us all profoundly, so that the tears came into our eyes. Father's youngest brother Jeremy, too, (Remy we called him) declared himself ready to quit his father's house for the sake of the Faith. Uncle Remy loved a joke even about serious matters, so, being a very stout man, he announced his intention, since he had weight enough to carry without the addition of a beggar's wallet, to cross the Channel and enter the Duke of Parma's Light Cavalry, provided Queen Elizabeth was pleased to lay hands on Woxindon.

On hearing that, my sister Anne burst out laughing: "Uncle Remy in the Light Dragoons!" she exclaimed, "why he weighs twenty-five stone! I shall follow the regiment, too, to see such a wonderful sight." Then suddenly turning grave, she added: "There is no need to ask Mary and me. We would rather die a thousand times over than deny our Faith."

Of course I agreed to that heartily, though I did not add that the mere thought of leaving Woxindon made me cry. My little brother Frith, too, looked up gravely from under his clustering curls, and said he would not mind going begging in the least; only he should ask the Queen to let him take his pretty grey pony with him, so that grandmother, who could not walk far, might ride on it, as he had seen the gypsies doing, when they passed by the castle a few days ago, with horse and cart and dancing bear. Grandmother praised her little pet for his thoughtfulness and rewarded it

with a picture of Our Lady. But father said we must be prepared to make the sacrifice not only in word but in deed; meanwhile we must retrench as much as possible, and reduce our establishment. He and his brothers would help in the field-work and in the stables, and we, that is his two daughters, must occupy ourselves in the kitchen and in the garden; but as far as the hospitality offered to strangers, especially to our persecuted fellow-catholics, was concerned, no alteration should be made, as long as he could call an acre of land and a stone of the manor house his own.

Such was the unanimous resolution solemnly made before Almighty God in the upper room of Woxindon on one of the first days of April, in the year of Grace 1586. And, singularly enough, on the very next morning, as I was sweeping out that same chamber, I perceived for the first time the fragile plant, at which the more it grew, the more we wondered. It sprang up and grew in the ceiling, between the principal rafter and the mortar, both of which are covered with a smooth layer of cement or gypsum, so that we could not conceive how any seed could possibly have lodged there; nor how, without any earth or moisture, the plant could strike root, and flourish as it did. When I first espied it, it could scarcely be seen, and I very nearly pulled it up, but on second thought, I left it there, to see if it could grow in such a place. It soon shot up, and put out branches and leaves, and amongst the beautiful green leaves, which were heart-shaped and serrated at the edge, five stalks appeared, each about the length of two

fingers, with a little bud at the end. In course of time these buds blossomed into a delicate flower, cruciform with four slender red petals. And after the flowers had faded, it put forth its fruits, without rain, or dew or sun; they had the appearance of fine, blood red berries. Never at any time had we had or seen any like plant, and we called it nothing but the wonderful flower. We all went every day to look at it; grandmother above all took the greatest delight in it, for she regarded it as a pledge of divine favours. Many were the different significations given to it; Father Weston, who often stayed in our house at that time, before the commencement of his long incarceration of seventeen years, looked upon it as symbolical of the five Sacred Wounds, although he declared it to be his opinion that there was nothing extraordinary in the flower itself, only the way in which it had sprung up and its manner of growth might certainly be called very marvellous. But that I leave to be taken for what it is worth, everyone is at liberty to form his own conclusions about the flower. Later events will perhaps show that it was not without its own significance.[1])

If I remember aright, it was on the very same day when we first saw the marvellous plant, that Anthony Babington rode over from London to us with my Uncle Remy for the first time. I can well recall his pleasant, comely countenance, just the one to take the fancy of young girls such as Anne and myself. He had merry, blue eyes, brown

1) Cfr. Troubles of Our Catholic Forefathers, Series ii, p. 187.

curly hair, on account of which we used to speak of him among ourselves as "Curly head", and above his well cut lips, about which a good-humoured smile almost continually played, a slight down made itself seen. He was always carefully, even foppishly dressed, and because of this my grandmother, who loved the old fashioned simplicity, took a dislike to him from the outset. When I saw him for the first time, he was wearing one of the new fashioned high hats, with a narrow brim and an ostrich feather. Over his silk doublet, which was trimmed with bows and ribbands, a collar edged with lace, but not too large and full, was turned back. A blue velvet mantle adorned with silver hung round his shoulders, and beneath that a broad band supported a long slender rapier, of the sort called Alexander Farnese, in the place of the good old English sword and leathern belt. Such was the young fellow who at the side of our broad-shouldered, somewhat unwieldly Uncle Remy, came up to us girls, as we were weeding the flower beds, one fine sunny afternoon in spring, He bowed most politely when uncle introduced him, and Anne, who contrary to her wont, appeared slightly embarrassed, did not answer the jest which accompanied his words. The visitor admired our flowers, and said he had not seen even in the royal gardens in Paris, anything to equal the tulips and hyacinths that we had then in full blossom. We told him that the Reverend Mr. Burton, who had come over from the seminary at Douay disguised as a gardener, brought us the bulbs of these flowers.

"He died, did he not, under your roof, which is renowned for its hospitality among all the Catholics of England?" he inquired.

"That is quite true, Mr. Babington," I answered. "We buried the worthy man out yonder, under that oak, by the side of our dear mother. This wreath which we have been making out of the flowers he gave us, is to be laid on the spot where they both rest."

Then for the first time I saw an expression come into the young man's eyes that made me think he was not as superficial a character as his flighty manner might lead one to imagine. "Most men would risk a battle to gain such a crown," he rejoined. I did not quite catch his meaning, and I said that our simple wreath was but a poor emblem of the crown of justice laid up for all those who, especially in times like ours, preserve the faith. Thereupon Uncle Remy observed in his joking way that there was a fine preacher lost in me, and went his way with the young nobleman into the house.

This Babington of whom I speak belonged to an old Derbyshire family; he was the eldest son of Sir Henry Babington, a confessor for the faith, whose long term of imprisonment had resulted in his death. Anthony was still a student at Oxford when his father died; after that he travelled in France and the Netherlands until he attained his majority, when he returned to England to take possession of his large estates at Dethick, near Sheffield. It will readily be understood that this young noble, who was as handsome as he was wealthy

appeared to us as the hero of a fairy tale. As for me, my affections were fixed upon the cloister; but my sister who was a few years my junior, and only eighteen at that time, fell in love with him at once. She tried to hide this from me by calling him a vain coxcomb, and ridiculing his foreign manners, and accusing me of being too fond of talking to him. But I was not so easily deceived, I saw very plainly that she was deeply smitten.

Mr. Babington staid for a whole week with us at Woxindon, on the pretext of wanting to confer about important matters with Father Weston, whom we were expecting to return from a missionary expedition to Berkshire. He generally went about, like the blessed martyr Campion, in the character of a jewel-merchant from one nobleman's seat to another; and verily he carried with him a treasure to offer for purchase, none other than the pearl of great price whereof the Gospel speaks. When the priests went on these missionary journeys they were not unfrequently accompanied by young noblemen, who introduced them to the families who were either open or covert adherents of the Catholic Church. In fact some years before, several Catholic young men of position had formed an association, with the object of affording assistance to the secular priests and the Jesuit Fathers, whom the Pope sent from time to time to succour his afflicted children in England. They used every endeavour to keep them from falling into the clutches of the pursuivants; and when this happened, they exerted

themselves actively in behalf of the unhappy prisoners. On this Christian guild the Holy Father bestowed a special benediction, and attached to it privileges and indulgences. Mr. Babington was a member of this association; it was while visiting my Uncle Robert in Newgate that he made the acquaintance of Uncle Remy. No wonder then that we regarded him as a dear and welcome guest.

No one was fonder of him than my little brother Frith. From the very first he laid himself out to amuse the boy. When the sun shone, he took him out riding on his grey pony in the meadow, and when April showers blew up, and heavy rain drops pattered sharply against the half-windows, he would take a sheet of cardboard, and with a few swift strokes of the pencil, for he was an accomplished draughtsman, produce before the delighted child groups of soldiery: the Dutch or German *Landsknecht*, the Spanish arquebusier, the Swiss helebardier, nay even the Prince of Parma himself on horseback. Again he would cover the paper with objects of the chase, huntsman and hound, hare and fox, roebuck and deer and wild-boar. Then Anne would fetch her colour-box and attire the soldiers in green and gold, in red and blue, giving them a black moustache and ruddy nose, while peals of laughter sounded from all the three. For my sister had soon dropped her shy manner towards our merry guest, on the contrary, she was not a little saucy in her behaviour, so that my grandmother had occasion to reprove her with word or sign. It was all no use, and if I ventured so much as to say a word to her she pulled a wry

face, and asked if I was jealous of her, and if I thought she did not see that I was setting my cap at the young Lord of Dethick.

I need hardly say that I felt hurt by this unsisterly speech, which certainly was quite undeserved, and I made a resolution for the future to keep my admonitions to myself. Besides, my father had witnessed this little passage of arms, and he only smiled, letting us see very plainly that he would have no objection to Mr. Babington as a son-in-law. One really cannot blame him for this, since in times such as those in which we lived, parents were naturally anxious to see their daughters provided for. I never thoroughly liked the young man; he was too frivolous and jocular to suit my taste. I should have preferred a graver man as a husband, for my sister, I mean; still it must be acknowledged that her sprightly disposition was very well in keeping with his vivacious manner.

Yet there was that in him, as my father said, which would make him a fine character, when his youthful follies were got rid of. He was a staunch, true-hearted Catholic, always ready to make sacrifices for his religion. It was a pleasure to hear him talk about the captive Queen, Mary Stuart. His eyes sparkled and he grew quite eloquent in her praise. When twelve years old he had gone to Sheffield Castle as page to the Earl of Shrewsbury, in whose custody the unhappy Queen of Scots then was, and thus he had become acquainted with that beautiful and virtuous, but no less unfortunate Princess. Our eyes used to fill with

tears while he related how at her command he had often carried the dishes from her own table to the poor at the castle gate, and how she used continually to pray for her enemies and calumniators, above all for her cousin Elizabeth. We could fancy how many a time he fell on his knees at the captive Queen's feet, and kissed her hand, pledging himself to be her faithful servant. Then she would stroke his rosy cheek with a smile, and say with motherly tenderness; "What would you do for me, my child?" and he would reply enthusiastically: "I will set your Majesty free, as George Douglas did from Lochleven Castle." Upon that, the smile would fade from her countenance, as she answered: "That is all nonsense, Anthony! Douglas and other brave men shed their blood for me, it is true, but they made my lot none the lighter, rather the reverse. My future is in God's hand; beware, when you are grown to man's estate, how you stir a finger in my defense, it might cost you your blood and even your life."

"Thereupon", Babington added, when narrating these reminiscences, "I used to assure her that I could have no greater happiness than to shed my blood for her sake. And what I felt as a boy, I now feel as a man. Who knows whether I may not yet meet with an opportunity to redeem my word."

The manner in which he uttered these words gave us to understand that he had formed some design in connection with the Queen of Scots. I saw from my sister Anne's face that she noticed this too; for she turned pale, and fixed her large

dark eyes on the young man with a peculiar expression. Yet neither my father, who did not view the matter in so serious a light, nor either of us, asked him a single question about his plans; we only talked in general about the captive Queen, who had been removed from Sheffield Castle to Wingfield, thence to Tutbury, and only last Christmas brought to Chartley Castle, where in Sir Amias Paulet she had a grim Puritan for her jailer. Only Mr. Babington observed casually, that Chartley was at no great distance from his seat at Dethick, and that he knew all the people in the neighbourhood very well. Putting two and two together, I felt little doubt that he had some definite project in his mind.

CHAPTER III.

My Wife speaks of some other visitors who came to Woxindon, and of the important matters that were discussed there.

Two or three days after Mr. Babington had been talking to us in that interesting manner about the Queen of Scots, the saintly priest, Father William Weston, came back from his tour in Berkshire. He said mass for us, and afterwards delivered a most instructive discourse on the words: "Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and so to enter into his glory?" (S. Luke 24, 26.) For it was the blessed, though not for us joyous Eastertide, and well it was for us, at that holy season, to be encouraged by the example of Christ, who himself points out to His bride, the Holy Church, the way of suffering as the way that leads to victory. On the self same day Babington had a long conversation with this Father, the result of which, to judge from his manner, was not altogether satisfactory. Later on, unfortunately not until some three months had elapsed, I learnt from Anne what was the subject upon which they had conferred.

Well nigh three weeks had now gone by since I first noticed the singular little plant in the upper chamber. In this interval, it had thriven amazingly, so that already the five little stalks or branches were discernible. One day we—the Reverend Father, that is, Anthony Babington, Anne and myself—had gone up to look at it,

and give our opinion about it, when little Frith came running up to announce the arrival of a messenger from London, whom Uncle Robert had sent to tell us that both he and Father Thompson were to appear before the criminal court at Westminster on the morrow. On hearing this, Uncle Remy and Babington at once took horse to go to London. Father Weston went with them, passing as Edmund the jewel merchant, to afford if possible, the comfort of his spiritual ministrations to the condemned. Thus Christian charity urged him again to risk falling into the lion's jaws.

It will readily be imagined that we spent a considerable part of the next day in the Oratory, reciting psalms and the litany of the Saints in behalf of the captives. Towards evening Uncle Remy sent a servant to inform us that Robert had, by her Majesty's gracious pleasure, been condemned to 18 months imprisonment, and a fine of £1000 ; [1]) at the same time he was gravely admonished to desist for the future from all papist practices, and regularly to attend the public worship as established by royal command. The Priest William Thompson was sentenced to the terrible death incurred for high treason, according to Act 27 of Queen Elizabeth. My father who had been ailing for some time past, was so deeply distressed by these tidings that he took to his bed in consequence. He said he thought it was almost out of his power to raise the sum of £1000 for his brother without mortgaging the last remnants of his property. The sentence of death against the priest he did not think

1) Equivalent to at least £5000 at the present time.

would be carried out, but commuted probably to perpetual exile since there had already been three priests put to death by the executioner at Tyburn that year, and the Queen would be careful not to push matters too far.

This unfortunately, however was not the case. As long as I live I shall not forget the 20th April 1586. A beautiful Spring day had succeeded a long run of rough winds and rainy weather, and the warm sunshine had beguiled our grandmother to yield to our entreaties, and come out into the garden. Anne and I each gave her an arm, and thus supported, she slowly paced along beside the borders, drinking in deep draughts of the mild balmy air, pausing now and again to admire some fresh wonder which Spring's soft fingers had wrought since yestereve. When, conformably with her invariable custom, she turned in the direction of the oak beneath whose shade the bodies of Fr. Bristow and my dear mother reposed, Anne stopped short, exclaiming: "Now, grandmother, are you really going to that grave again! What did I ask you to come out of that gloomy room into the bright sunshine for, if not for a little diversion for you and for us? Always sad and always mournful—I really cannot stand it! And you too, Mary, you go about with a hang dog pace, instead of helping me to cheer poor father and grandmother! Do look at the lovely flowers, the hyacinths and narcissus that are so deliciously fragrant, the dwarf fruit trees and espaliers one sheet of white and pink blossoms; the old cherry tree with the bees humming in its snowy branches,

the beeches out yonder in the wood, their branches just tipped with emerald green, and over all a deep blue sky such as one seldom sees in this country. Do you not hear the chaffinch's merry note? And oh look! what a splendid butterfly, just going to alight on the scarlet flowers of my crown-imperial —take care, Mary, you will frighten it away!"

"O, Anne, you are like that giddy thing yourself", replied grandmother smilingly, "if you can let the external delights of Spring engross your mind on such a day as this, memorable for the shedding of innocent blood. I hardly think I could have done so at your age. I remember the days when the Carthusian Fathers, when Sir Thomas More and the saintly Bishop Fisher were executed, I was then about as old as you are now; but good Heavens! what prayers we offered and what tears we shed. Yet I do not blame you for your high spirits, far from it; may you keep them long, only take care lest they go too far, and do not make great friends with frivolous, shallow-minded people."

"You mean Babington," Anne promptly responded. "Why are you so unjust to him? He is a zealous Catholic, and precisely for that reason he is not sour-visaged like the Puritans; and it is my belief that he has more serious business in hand than you have any idea of, or that his light-hearted way would lead one to suspect. If we had but a dozen men like him, Burghley and Walsingham, and whatever their names may be, would not find it such an easy matter to drive Catholics like helpless sheep to the slaughter house! And if I were a man, I would do like Babington—"

"You would bear your cross like a good Catholic as long as God may please," interposed grandmother with a solemn mien, "knowing as you well do, that the way of the Cross is the way of the Crown. But as for our Derbyshire guest, who seems to have made an extraordinary impression on my little Anne", she added, casting at the same time a searching glance on the blushing girl, "he is either on very confidential terms with you, or else he is very imprudent. Who would let a child like you get an inkling of his plans, much less communicate them to you?"

"He has told me his plans", Anne cried exitedly. "You all heard what he said about the good Queen of Scots, who is our rightful ruler. Surely no one can deny that, since no less than sixteen years ago the Holy Father deprived Elizabeth of her pretended right to the Crown! And if Mr. Babington or any other nobleman should entertain the design of delivering Queen Mary from prison, I for one should consider it to be a christian and chivalrous enterprise, and should support it by every means in my power."

My sister spoke with her characteristic impetuosity, in a half angry, half defiant manner, so that grandmother and I were no less startled by what she said than by the way in which she said it. We instinctively glanced around, fearing lest her words should have reached other ears than those for which they were intended. Fortunately there was no one near except Bosgrave, a faithful old maidservant, who was nearly deaf, or at any rate very hard of hearing. Relieved at this, I ex-

claimed: "For God's sake, Anne, take care what you are saying! If any Protestant overheard you, you would be thrown into the Tower, and torn to pieces on the rack for high treason!"

Then grandmother said gently: "My dear child, who has put such notions into your foolish little head? Of course I should be glad to see Queen Mary set at liberty, and in possession of the throne which is hers by right. But as far as the government of this country is concerned, you are perfectly aware that the Pope declared that Elizabeth's subjects were not to withdraw the allegiance they had sworn to her, and that Blessed Edmund Campion had prayed for her with his latest breath. Let us therefore pray God to bring her to a better mind, that she may return to the bosom of the Church, and that we may yet see happy days under her rule."

Our dear grandmother spoke with not a little animation, and a delicate colour tinged her usually pale countenance. But Anne stamped her foot upon the ground, exclaiming: "She will never be converted! The blood of hundreds and hundreds of innocent victims, many of whom were priests, cries like Able's blood to Heaven for vengeance against her. Only the other day Mr. Babington was saying—"

Here grandmother broke in really angrily: "I beg you will not be always quoting Mr. Babington to me," she said. "Since when, pray, have you taken this young man for your teacher?"

"He is not my teacher," Anne answered in a more subdued tone. "He is a very good young

man, and a most pleasant companion. No one can help liking him, he is such a noble-hearted, chivalrous fellow. Confess, Mary, that you are quite fond of him. He is a great favourite with Uncle Barty and Uncle Remy, and with father, too, not to speak of Frith, who began to cry when they started for London, because Babington told him in joke, that he was not coming back anymore. Besides we ought to be grateful to him for the kindness he showed Uncle Robert in prison. So do not be angry anymore, granny, dear, nor scold us poor children because we are not quite as wise and prudent as if we had your beautiful white hair.''

Thus peace was again concluded, and just at the right time too, for at that very moment Frith appeared running down the garden path towards us. ''They are coming!'' he exclaimed breathlessly. ''I saw them from the watchtower. Uncle Remy and Mr. Babington and a lot more men on horseback; they have just passed the clearing by the great oak, and will be here in another minute. I am going to tell old Thomas to let them in.''

We followed the child as quickly as grandmother's slow movements permitted, and came up just as the porter swung back the ponderous oaken gate, the only means of ingress from without into our garden, which was enclosed by a high wall. We had only a few minutes to wait before the riders emerged from the wood hard by, and sprang from the saddle, throwing the reins to the porter and stablemen who stood by. Frith began to stroke Mr. Babington's chestnut mare familiarly on the neck, and wanted to lead her away to the stable,

but to his vexation, Uncle Remy would in no wise consent to this.

We were longing to inquire about our beloved Father Thompson, but good manners compelled us to wait until Babington had duly presented his friends. This he did in an easy, graceful manner. Every little detail has impressed itself on my memory, and no wonder, because I then saw for the first time my future husband (far as I was from suspecting it at the moment). He was by no means the handsomest and the tallest of the six young men before me; on the contrary by the side of Mr. Tichbourne, he almost looked small and insignificant. (Let me observe, in passing, that I hope my dear husband will omit nothing that I say about him.) As I was saying, Mr. Babington began to introduce his friends, each of whom in turn stepped forward and bowed: "Chidiok Tichbourne, the head of that illustrious family in Hampshire, a lover of the muses; Edward Windsor, brother to Lord Windsor, a disciple of Hippocrates and Galenus. These two gentlemen are both inspired by Apollo; but the one indites his verses in his own tongue, the other adopts the classic language of Virgil." On hearing this, I looked from one to the other of the two young men in question, for although I had read poetry, I had never yet seen a living poet. To my surprise they seemed quite ashamed of what was said of them, for they both blushed like a silly girl, whereas the other gentlemen, Thomas Salisbury, Robert Barnewell and Henry Donne [1]), looked up bold and un-

1) Cf. Hosack 1, c. II, 342. Babington's Confederates.

abashed when they were presented to us, the first as a Son of Mars, on the eve of going to serve under Parma's standard, the others as friends of Diana, skilled in heron-hawking and fox-hunting. Mr. Tichbourne was a handsome man; his aristocratic bearing and pale countenance, his brown hair, which he wore rather longer than was customary, his thick, close clipped beard, and the somewhat melancholy expression of his large dark eyes, rendered him to my eyes the very ideal of a poet. My future husband, on the contrary, looked more like an ordinary country gentleman than one learned in the medical art and a tamer of Pegasus. He was rather below the average in height, and I could scarcely help laughing when I first saw his ruddy face and merry, round eyes. He is much the same now as he was then, only his beard has grown grey, his head is bald, and time has deepened the colour of his cheeks. In one thing age has made no difference, a thing which I did not discern at my first interview with him, but which has rendered, and does render him dearer to me than the fairest Adonis could have been; I mean his heart of gold.

(N. B. of the writer.—For the sake of the last words I must forgive my wife's strictness on my appearance. The fact that I have written down verbatim her not too complimentary description of my person, will convince the reader that it is correct. Meanwhile I will revenge myself on her in a truly christian manner—by depicting her as my memory recalls her on that day in question. Her deport-

ment was sweet and winning, her complexion resembled the lily and the rose; long silken lashes shaded her lovely blue eyes, which were usually cast down. Her golden hair was neatly, carefully fastened in plaits about her head, and round her neck she wore a lace collar of moderate height, nothing to compare with the enormous erections the Queen had brought into fashion. Her light-blue frock was made in an unpretending style, without great puffs at the shoulders. Her slender figure and gentle, modest demeanour formed a contrast to her younger sister Anne, who was remarkably vivacious and forward. Indeed one would hardly have taken them for sisters, for the one was tall and fair, the other short and dark. There is no need to speak of the changes thirty years have wrought in my wife. External changes there necessarily must be, though the sterling qualities of her true and loving heart have—as she is pleased to say of me—remained the same; I will only quote the counsel of the poet (changing the gender) when he says;

O formose puer, nimium ne crede colori !
O lovely child, trust not too much to thy beauty!

I will now allow my wife to resume her narrative.)

Mr. Babington concluded his introductions of his companions by bespeaking a kind reception for them on the ground that they were all friends of his, scions of the highest families in the land, members of the Association for the Succour of Priests, and staunch Catholics to boot. Grandmother

replied that they were more welcome as being faithful sons of the Holy Church, than as the descendants of noble ancestors, since she held the heritage of the Children of God to be far more honourable than any earthly pedigree.

Then the gentlemen kissed our hands, and we all walked together down the broad path between hedges of yew towards the castle. At last we were at liberty to ask after Uncle Robert and Father Thompson. "My Brother is quite well", Uncle Remy said in answer to our inquiries; "he is a prisoner in the 'Clink' at present, and his jailer seems disposed to take a bribe, so it is to be hoped that we may be able to make his lot bearable, and perhaps even help him to escape. William Thompson however has received the martyr's crown."

"Then the Queen has not pardoned him!" Anne exclaimed in her impulsive manner. "Ah, if I were a man, that bloodthirsty—"

"You forget yourself sadly, child," said grandmother, not allowing her to finish the sentence. "What will our noble guests think of you!"

But Babington instantly came to the rescue. "We think, Madam," he said, "that your fair granddaughter's just indignation does her great credit, and shows the generous disposition of her heart. Hearing such sentiments expressed ought to incite us men to form heroic enterprises."

The look wherewith Anne repaid her champion was not lost on me. Uncle Remy also interposed: "You must not be too hard on our little madcap, mother," he said in a conciliatory tone.

But grandmother went on: "These gentlemen are very polite, and you are very kind, my son, to make excuses for my granddaughter. However, I never will have a word uttered in my presence offensive to her Majesty. The enterprises to which Mr. Babington alludes, will certainly not be directed against the Queen, otherwise they would not deserve to be called heroic, but rash and foolhardy. Instead of the blessing of God they would draw down on us His chastisements, and might perhaps be the means of costing many innocent persons their life."

How often at a later period these words, inspired apparently by a spirit of prophecy, recurred to my mind! They evidently made an impression on our guests at the time; I noticed Windsor looked very grave. But Mr. Tichbourne thanked grandmother effusively for her judicious admonitions, which he said were most well-timed; yet he assured her that his friend Babington would not undertake anything unworthy of an English nobleman and a firm Catholic. The example of the two martyrs, who had that day shed their blood should teach us to render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's."

We were surprised to hear that two priests had been executed, and in answer to our inquiries Tichbourne went on to tell us that Richard Sergeant, the scion of an ancient Gloucestershire family had suffered at the same time as Thompson. The sole offence for which he had been condemned, was having remained in England in

spite of the statute passed in Parliament, declaring every priest who did not quit the country within a fixed time guilty of high treason.

"It is clear, Babington answered, "that Burghley and Walsingham act thus in order to strike alarm into the priests who are in concealment here, or into those who are expected to arrive from Rheims or from Rome. From what I hear the members of the Privy Council have learnt through their spies that a fresh band of heroic missioners are preparing to come to England. Walsingham alone is said to have some fifty traders in his pay, mostly apostates, some of them being priests, who keep him informed of all that goes on in the seminaries and Jesuit colleges."

"Perils from false brethren! Just the same as in the Apostles' time," remarked grandmother. "But the disgrace which a few renegades bring upon Holy Church is more than wiped out by the blood of her Priests. Lord Burghley is greatly mistaken, if he thinks to terrify them by executions. It is the hope of obtaining a martyr's crown which allures them to these shores. But here we are at the house door. I pray God that the coming of these dear and welcome guests under our roof may be blest to them and to us. All in Woxindon will be deeply interested and edified by hearing how the two martyrs won their palm. I shall therefore ask you, when you have partaken of some refreshment, to give us an account of the manner in which they passed through their last conflict."

So saying, grandmother conducted the six gentlemen into the castle.

CHAPTER IV.

An account is related of the two Priests' martyrdom; also of a very unpleasant surprise which we experienced.

As I have already remarked, my father was far from well, yet he would not allow his indisposition to prevent him from doing the honours of his table to his guests, and setting before them a roast joint and a brace or two of snipe. Although it was already three weeks after Easter, there were still some birds about the outskirts of the wood, and Uncle Barty had managed to bring down a few, not with his gun, but with the old-fashioned English bow and arrow. When the dishes had been removed, and father said grace, we gathered round the chimney place. The atmosphere of the high vaulted hall was rather chilly, though the day had been sunny, and father could not do without a fire. The dancing flames cast a ruddy glow on the circle of guests and members of the family, while in the half light beyond the servants and retainers stood, who had come to hear about Father Thompson's death.

Then Uncle Remy began to relate how with Babington's assistance he had succeeded in conveying a note through the hands of one of the jailers to the prisoner, bidding him when on the way to the place of execution, look up at the window over the door of "The Three Tuns", a hostelry not twenty yards from the gate through which they would pass to go to Tyburn. He would see a good

friend standing there, who would wave him a last farewell with his handkerchief; that was to signify a priest, who would give him the last absolution. Thompson himself had done the same, when the Reverend Thomas Alfield was dragged to Tyburn. But when Uncle Remy and his friends learnt on the morrow that another priest would be led to execution with Thompson, they tried to persuade Father Weston not to go to the Three Tuns, on the ground that he would be exposing himself unnecessarily to danger, since the two priests could mutually give each other absolution. "However the good Father would not deprive them of the consolation." continued my uncle, "so he and I took our stand at the window in question, when the time came for the procession to pass by. We already heard cries of "No Popery!" sounding in the distance. First came an interminable stream of the lowest of the people; then a band of armed men, and with them the sheriff for the county, on horseback, with several magistrates and members of the council. After them followed the horse to whose tail the hurdle was fastened, on which the two priests lay bound. By their side ran some Puritan preachers, exhorting them even in this their last hour, to abjure the Babylonian beast and accept the pure Gospel. You may fancy how my fingers twisted at the sight of them. At last we were able to see the two victims. I am not ashamed to confess that my eyes filled with tears when I beheld them, patient and resigned, stretched on the hurdle, covered with the mire of the streets. Their faces were turned towards one another, and

they appeared to be engaged in prayer. As they passed through the gateway of the prison, I noticed that Thompson whispered something to his companion, and they both raised their eyes inquiringly to the window. As soon as they descried Father Weston holding a white handkerchief to his face, they raised their heads as much as they could from the hurdle, in token of greeting and of gratitude. This action did not escape the notice of the accursed preachers; one of them, suspecting the cause, instantly shouted "A Priest, a Mass Priest!" But I thrust Father Weston aside, and interposed my broad shoulders between him and the spectators; besides, before the sheriff's officers could catch the words above the uproar and tumult of the rabble in that narrow street, the danger was over. Our good old John hurried Father Weston out by a back door, and conducted him through a labyrinth of narrow alleys to the residence of Lady Paulet, where he is in security for the present. Nevertheless he is coming back to us after nightfall. I went down and mixed in the crowd, and by good use of my elbows contrived to get pretty close to the hurdle. But when we got to the vicinity of Tyburn, the throng of people was so dense, that I was unable to get near to the condemned. My friends here were more fortunate, so let them tell you about the execution of the sentence."

Babington then took up the narrative. "My companions and I," he said, "were so near, that we not only saw every gesture, but heard every word of the two priests. We had ridden out early, and taken our stand not as much as ten paces from

the gallows. Thus we had a full view of the horrible preparations for the cruel tragedy. I could not help thinking that very likely my own life might be ended in that way, considering that in the present day no Catholic can feel sure that he will not under some pretext or other be arraigned for high treason, and delivered over to the hangman. The servants had already lighted a huge fire underneath the vast cauldron into which the head and quarters of the martyrs were to be thrown, and the bystanders began to indulge in coarse jokes about the kind foresight of the Queen, who had the ravens' food cooked for them. Thereupon our friend Windsor here, who has all the Latin poets at his fingers' ends, observed to me in an ironical tone:

Principe nil ista mitius orbis habet!
(Never did a more gracious Princess walk this earth!)

I for my part stooped over my horse's neck and dealt the principal speaker a blow on the mouth, that would have felled him to the ground, had not the crowd been so thickly packed together. At the same time I told him beware how he let his tongue wag about the Queen's Majesty.

But my zeal nearly got me into trouble, for the mob raised the cry that I and my friends, who stood by me bravely, were papists, and called upon the Captain of the Guard to arrest us as traitors. God knows what would have come of it had not at that moment a murmur run through the multitude behind us: Here they come, here they come. Sure enough, the mournful procession was close at hand. It was a touching sight to behold

the rage of the populace on the one side, the peaceful serenity of the victims on the other. The hurdle stopped just in front of us, so that I had the privilege of throwing my handkerchief to the priests, in order that they might wipe the mud off their faces. Father Thompson recognized me, and smiled his thanks; he endeavoured to say something to me, but the hubbub was so great that I could not catch a word. Most probably he wished to reiterate the warning which he gave me shortly before his arrest, not to mix myself up in any dangerous plots. He wanted to give me back the handkerchief, but the sheriff would not allow of it. "Nothing of the sort!" he exclaimed. "We shall have a fresh St. Veronica perhaps, and more popish idolatries carried on with the dirty rag. Do you take care! The rope is not far from the neck of every Papist." One of the soldiers, who were loosing the ropes that bound the condemned to the hurdle, thrust the handkerchief into his pocket, and looked at me with a knowing wink, which I was not at a loss to interpret. A few hours later he turned up at the Red Lion, a well known popish hostelry, and gave me the handkerchief for a crown piece. Here it is."

With these words Babington took from the breast pocket of his doublet the handkerchief in question, and we pressed around him to touch the venerated relic. "It is covered with spots of blood", he said. "The scoundrel acknowledged that he wiped his hands on it, after the butchery was over. Will Mrs. Bellamy accept it as a memorial of the saintly Priest, whose last mass was said in her house?"

"I shall value it more than gold and precious stones," answered the dear old lady, as she pressed the handkerchief to her lips, and passed it round for all the others to kiss. "We will divide it presently, for doubtless you and your friends would like to keep a portion. Then both the priests met death with fortitude and resignation?"

"They died like true saints and martyrs for God. It was said openly that the fact of being Priests was their only crime. They prayed on the scaffold and pardoned all their enemies. "Jesus, be thou a Jesus to me", were Sergeant's last words. Thompson's were: "Into thy hands I commend my spirit." His last act was to make the sign of the cross.

"Spare me the description of the horrible butchery that followed. My tears blinded me, when I saw the executioner tear the heart out of the martyr's breast, and hold it up, still palpitating, to the gaze of the multitude, with the words: "This is the heart of a traitor!" And then as he threw it in the face of the dead man, I could not help thinking with what love for friend and foe that noble heart had been animated! Well, their heads are now fixed on London Bridge, where half a century ago Henry VIII. impaled the heads of the blessed Bishop of Rochester and the great Sir Thomas More; where from that time until now, more relics have been exposed than Westminster Abbey could boast of possessing in the good old days. Their quarters are set over the city gates.".

"And I hope to see the heads and quarters of all of you in the very same place before long!" These words, uttered in a harsh voice which came out of the deep shadows that lay across the hall, just as Babington finished speaking, caused us all to spring from our seats startled and terrified. "It is Topcliffe!" Anne exclaimed.

"None other than he, my fair young lady," said the pursuivant, advancing out of the gloom with a chuckle. "We are old acquaintances, eh, sweetheart?" And the brute actually tried to pinch my sister's cheek familiarly. But quick as thought the girl snatched the dagger which Uncle Barthy, who was standing by, wore in his belt, and brandished it in the face of the insolent fellow, shrieking with pale lips, but flashing eyes: "If you dare to touch me with one of your bloodstained fingers I will strike you to the heart."

At this unexpected sally Topcliffe fell back two or three paces. Meanwhile my father and all the other gentlemen had drawn their swords, and the hall was in an uproar with the clatter of arms. The intruder retreated to the door, and shouted to his retainers who entered at his call. "Lay down your swords," he then said, "or I will bring you all to the gallows, or else shoot you down on this very spot like a herd of swine!" To give more effect to his words, he discharged his pistol over our heads, so that the bullets struck our ancestor Godelac, whose portrait hung over the chimney piece, full in the face. I thought at the first moment that my father had been struck, for he grasped at a chair for support, and he sank into it, every

vestige of colour leaving his face. I flew to his side and asked if he were hurt! He said no, but whispered, pressing his hand to his heart: "The cramp again!" I was going to run up stairs to fetch the drops he was in the habit of taking, but to my astonishment I was not allowed to leave the hall; that wretch Topcliffe cooly stepped in front of me. "Not a soul shall leave this hall," he said, "until I have minutely examined every one present, for it is my belief that this time that accursed Jesuit Edmund will not escape me."

When I heard this speech, knowing as I did that it was directed against Father Weston, whose return we were expecting every moment, I touched my little brother on the shoulder, and under cover of Uncle Remy's portly form, whispered in his ear: "Now, Frith, let us all see what a clever little fellow you are. Skip out unobserved behind these men, and run to meet old John and the good priest, whom this wicked man wants to catch, and tell them he is here. Your guardian angel will take care of you!"

"I would rather get out of the window," the boy replied, "if you can open it for me." That was a good idea, for the casement was not very high, and there was no danger in jumping onto the soft mould of the flower beds below. Fortunately for us we were standing close to a recess in which there was a window, so while Topcliffe was looking at my father, I unfastened the casement, the boy clambered out, let himself fall to the ground, and I heard his retreating steps, as he ran down the gravel walk.

Meanwhile my father with a great effort and in a faint voice, asked Topcliffe by what right he had dared, unannounced and without the pretext of a warrant, in defiance of Magna Charta, to invade the house of an English citizen with an armed force. A contemptuous grin passed over the ugly features of the intruder. He replied that those privileges applied only to honest Englishmen, not to accursed Papists. But as his conscience was tender, he had provided himself with a bit of paper from the sheriff. Thereupon he drew a document out of his leathern jerkin, adding: "You must be good enough to excuse my sudden appearance in your midst, my kind sirs, for we know by experience, that the mice have a trick of slipping into their holes if they know the cat is coming. Besides I have had the edification of hearing the conclusion of the interesting narrative of the events of this morning, which one of these young gentlemen was relating so graphically. Ha, ha, ha! We will take care that a good many more precious relics are exposed on London Bridge and the city gates."

After uttering these mocking words, Topcliffe proceeded to interrogate, in a summary way at first, each of our guests singly, inquiring who he was and for what purpose he was here. Each one told his name and standing, saying that he was on a visit of friendship to the family of the Bellamys. "Is that all?" he asked. Salisbury and Babington rejoined that it was quite enough for him to know, and that they could not be required to answer any more questions without a warrant of arrest from the Lord

Chief Justice or the Privy Council.—Softly, softly, the young gentlemen must not answer the Queen's Commissioner so pertly, or he would have to teach them manners. He could tell them what they were there for; they were going to make their Easter confession to the priest, and get absolution for their evil lives. No doubt it was highly necessary, all the town knew how it was the fashion for the Popish gentry to waste their time in gambling and carousing, at river parties and the tennis-court. They would do well to take a pious book in their hand or better still, the Bible, and purge the old corrupt leaven of Rome out of their hearts.

Topcliffe kept up a running fire of these caustic remarks whilst he was examining the young noblemen in turn. When he got to the last, who happened to be my future husband, and heard that he was Lord Windsor's brother, his rage got the better of him, and he roared out: "Say at once that you are Beelzebub's brother! You shall repent playing off your jokes on me! You are none other than the execrable Jesuit Edmund!" So saying he caught hold of the astonished young man by the arm. Everybody who was present burst out laughing; and the man, seeing he had made himself foolish, turned Windsor's head round sharply, so that the firelight fell on his face. When he perceived his youthful and blooming appearance, he swore a sound oath, and said: "The fellow is of middle height, and wears a green doublet of Dutch cloth—but his complexion is not pale. He may be painted though, for these priests know all the devilish arts of the Scarlet Lady. Bring me some water, and we will see if his colour comes off!"

Thereupon our old Bosgrave, escorted by one of the bailiffs, was obliged to fetch a handbasin and towel, and Windsor must submit to having his face well scrubbed, the only result being that his colour was heightened by the process. Shouts of laughter rang through the hall; even our old grandmother's features relaxed into a smile; Anne could hardly control herself, while Uncle Remy held his sides and laughed till he cried. One of Windsor's favourite classical quotations would have been appropriate at that moment: *Risum teneatis, amici.* Restrain your laughter, my friends; for no one knew how to stop this chorus of merriment, led by Anne's shrill treble, accompanied by Uncle Remy's deep bass.

It may well be imagined that all this did not put Topcliffe in a better temper. After he had given a pull to Windsor's moustache to ascertain whether it was due to nature or to art, he left him alone, but made a rush at Uncle Remy, exclaiming loudly: "You were standing at the window of the *Three Tuns* beside the Jesuit this morning. You must surely know where he is. I know for certain that he rode away in your company. And if you do not instantly tell me, you shall be thrown into the Tower to-morrow morning, and before to morrow evening you shall make acquaintance with the rack, and perhaps get a foot or so added to your length as you lay."

"Give me time to get my breath again, Master Topcliffe," my uncle answered with perfect good humour. "I am choking; and no wonder, for, upon my word, never did I see a more able *valet-*

de-chambre than you have proved to my friend Windsor,—I will not deny that I was in the *Three Tuns* this morning, and that I witnessed from one of the windows, the shameful conduct of your underlings and your preachers. Somebody may have stood by me in a green doublet; they are common enough in London, and until I heard that to wear that colour was high treason by Act of Parliament—for nothing of the sort is too preposterous in these happy times, under the blessings enjoyed under the new Gospel—I shall not pay great heed to the colour of a man's doublet. Of this much I can at any rate assure you, and I am prepared to assert it upon my oath, that no one else was with me when I rode out of London this afternoon except my good friends, these gentlemen here present. Your spies have either been misled by the dress Mr. Windsor happened to be wearing, or else they have put you on a false track, because they considered the price of blood you offered them to be insufficient pay."

Topcliffe would most probably have proceeded to ransack the house after his wont, knocking holes in the walls, upsetting all the furniture, plundering the storehouse and cellar, going off with his men after two days without having made any discovery, but not without a good deal of stolen booty, if something quite unanticipated had not occurred, namely the sudden seizure of my father with a mortal sickness.

During the judicial examination of our guests, and the war of words which ensued, our attention had, I am grieved and somewhat ashamed

to say, been diverted from my good father, who sat bent down in his arm-chair. All at once I heard him draw a deep breath as if in pain, and looking round, I saw the ghastly hues of death gathering on the face I loved so well, while his hand was pressed convulsively to his left side. "Look at father, look at father!" I ejaculated, throwing myself on my knees at his feet. "He is dying!" Anne exclaimed. Grandmother and the others also knelt down by his side and began to pray aloud; whereupon the servants sobbed and cried as they gathered round, making a scene that would have moved the stoniest heart to compassion. We had no doubt that the excitement had brought on another stroke, which the physician had warned us would probably prove fatal. In fact we thought all was over, for my father gave no signs of consciousness, and lay back in the arm-chair like a corpse.

We poor women did not know what to do; one called for the physic, another for the physician, a third uttered the prayer for a departing soul. Then young Mr. Windsor stepped forward and took my father's hand, saying that he had studied medicine though he had not yet had much practice, and might be of some use in this emergency. He at once informed us that my father was not dead, only in a swoon, from which he hoped, please God, to awaken him. The young man appeared to us like an angel from heaven, and under his direction we busied ourselves in rubbing the sick man's limbs, and by the application of cold water and strong essences endeavouring to

rouse him from the lethargy. When his respiration again became perceptible, Mr. Windsor succeeded, though not without difficulty, in getting him to swallow a few drops of some tincture.

After that, Windsor said we must put my father to bed, and hot poultices and mustard plasters must be put on, and renewed during the night. Then a truly diabolical thought suggested itself to Topcliffe. He had been looking on with rather a shamefaced mien while we were engrossed with the invalid; now he came forward and said if Mr. Bellamy required our attention continually that night, he would not interfere, but he must be allowed to choose the room which he was to occupy. We all believed this was an act of hateful tyranny only done for the pleasure of annoying us, and Uncle Remy spoke sharply to him about it, saying he wondered that he could take such a liberty in the presence of sickness, and threatening to lodge a complaint against him before the Privy Council. But Topcliffe persisted in what he had said, treating my uncle's threats with the utmost contempt. And when we asked him, since he took it upon himself to behave as master of Woxindon, where it was his pleasure that my father should be taken, to our surprise he named the upper chamber, where the wonderful flower grew in the ceiling. Former researches had made him intimately acquainted with every in and out of our mansion, and we had no doubt at all, that he had his reasons for selecting that chamber for the sick room; but what those reasons were, I was at a loss to devine.

However for the present, there was nothing to be done but to make up a bed for father in the room indicated. As soon as all was in readiness, Uncle Remy took up his brother in his stalwart arms and carried him up the two flights of stairs like a child. There we laid him on the bed prepared for him, exactly under the spot were the wonderful flower grew.

CHAPTER V.

My Wife narrates certain incidents that occurred during the night that preceded her father's death.

Before proceeding to narrate the occurrences of that night, I must say a few words about the adventures little Frith met with.

I have already said that the boy let himself down from a casement in the hall into the garden below. The jump did him no harm, the distance was only a few feet, he had often jumped as far or farther. He then ran nimbly along the terrace and behind the yew hedges which border the way to the gate. It must have been through an inspiration of Providence that he went over the soft earth, not on the hard gravel, otherwise his footsteps would have been heard by the guard which Topcliffe had stationed at the garden gate. The pursuivants had taken old Thomas, the porter, by surprise, as they did once before, and set a watch at the gate, believing it to be the only means of egress, before Topcliffe and the rest of his party slipped into the house. This they could not have done without being observed, had not almost all the servants been assembled in the hall, to hear the account of the martyrs' death.

Now when little Frith got near the gate, he heard the men talking together, and perceived before it was too late that they were not our own people. So he crept back in the shade of the yew-hedge—it was three weeks after Easter and

the moon was out of its first quarter—till he reached the cherry-tree, then in full bloom, one of whose branches hung over the wall. He knew this tree well enough; only the year before he had climbed it without permission, before the cherries were fully ripe, and father had given him a scolding, and a beating, too, for it. Now he got into the tree, and slid along the branch until he was beyond the wall; then grasping one of the smaller branches with both hands, he let himself drop to the ground. He fell a good height, but thanks to his guardian angel, he was not much hurt. Picking himself up, he ran along the way through the wood leading past Woxindon from London to Harrow-on-the-hill. Here however his heart failed him, for he had to pass the cross roads, where the way to the old castle turns out of the main road, and a gruesome ghost-story which old Bosgrave had lately told him, just then came into his mind.

The story ran that more than a century ago, before the old fortress fell into ruins, one of the Knight's serving-men had assassinated a fellow-servant from motives of jealousy at that very spot, and had been hung as the punishment of his crime, on the oak that stood at the crossways. Since that time the place had been haunted; on moonlight nights two black dogs with eyes like glowing coals, had been seen chasing one another round the stem of the oak, till the castle-clock struck one, when they instantly disappeared. Whether this legend was idle talk, and the two dogs were really village curs at play in the moonlight; or whether, as old Bosgrave, and many persons, whose opinion was

worth more than hers, asserted, the souls of the two unhappy serving-men wandered about under that form, is a question which I cannot decide. But one thing I will say, that nothing could have induced me to go by night and alone to that uncanny spot.

Now Frith was only ten years old, so no wonder the poor little fellow's hair stood on end, when just as he stepped on to the cross road, and caught sight of the old oak in the moonlight, he beheld a great black dog not ten feet in front of him. We tried to persuade him afterwards, that it was nothing more than the shadow of a large branch thrown across his path, but he persisted that it was a real dog, not a shadow to which his own fears gave the form of a phantom. I will not assert that he was mistaken, since it is quite possible that the evil one, as Father Weston declared, might have tried to frighten little Frith, in order that the priest might fall into the hands of the pursuivants. However that may be, I know I should have run away as fast as I could. Not so Frith: he showed wonderful courage; he invoked his guardian angel and the Blessed Mother of God, then laying his hand on the little cross he always wore, and which contained a fragment of the true cross, with the sweet name of Jesus on his lips, he ran towards the ghostly dog, or whichever it was, though he trembled from head to foot. His bravery was rewarded, for as he went forward the phantom slunk away among the undergrowth and vanished in the darkness.

Just then a cloud covered the face of the

moon, and under the trees it was so dark that the boy, who was confused by the fright he had had, could not find his way. In his perplexity he knelt down and said an Our Father; scarcely had he finished the last word when he heard horses' hoofs approaching through the wood, and then voices, one of which he recognized as that of our old servor John. He hastened in the direction whence they came, and met the riders at no great distance from the crossway. The old serving-man was much startled at hearing a child's voice calling to him out of the darkness, and blessed himself in the old-fashioned way, with the words "All good spirits etc." But the next moment convinced him that it was no apparition, but his young master in bodily form; and when he and his companion heard the tidings the child brought, they gave thanks to God, who had thus delivered them from falling into their enemy's clutches. They then held a consultation as to what should be done; the priest wanted to conceal himself in the wood until daybreak, and then ride on further, for fear of bringing his entertainers into trouble. But John would not hear of this; he assured the priest that there was a capital hiding place in the old castle, only a little way off the main road, which communicated with our house by a secret way. He said it had often afforded a refuge to priests, and Father Weston would be safer there than anywhere else for the night. After a moment's deliberation, Father Weston consented, and well it was, as we shall hear presently, that he did so. The old servor lifted Frith up onto his horse,

and they all rode on towards the ruin, the darkness did not matter, for he knew every step of the way, and guided the horses with unerring hand to the foot of the square tower. Then he alighted, and after pushing aside a moss-grown slab of stone, he crept through a narrow aperture into a vaulted chamber, half-filled with rubbish, whither he beckoned to the priest to follow him; leaving Frith to hold the horses. Within this apartment he struck a light, lit a small oil lamp that stood in a deep recess in the wall, drew his companion's attention to a bed of dried leaves in the corner, showed him a kind of cupboard contrived in the masonry, which contained some provisions, and finally entreated him not to quit this hiding place, until, through the boy or some trusty messenger, he received tidings of Topcliffe's departure. This done, John left the vault, pushed the stone back carefully over the entrance, and told Frith they should now make their way back to the main road, and together ride straight up to the garden gate, as if they had just come from London. He also said that he meant to behave as if he had taken a little too much, for the sake of deceiving the guard, and getting himself and the horses home without much ado.

This was no sooner said than done. Frith mounted the priest's horse, a gentle animal, which trotted along behind old John, who as he neared the gate, began to sing snatches of drinking songs like a man in his cups, so that Topcliffe's men heard him coming from afar. Nor were they long in giving him admittance, with a good humoured

laugh at his expense. But the captain could not refrain from rebuking, in a few forcible words from Holy Scripture, the old popish sinner who was so intoxicated that he could hardly keep his seat in the saddle.

Such had been the adventures little Frith had met with. I need hardly say that he did not tell me all this that same evening, but only came to my side when father was being carried upstairs, and pulled my sleeve, whispering: "It is all right." And even this one word, which took at least one load off my mind, nearly got me into fresh trouble; for Topcliffe, who had eyes before and behind, flew like a hawk upon the boy, asking him what was all right, and where he had been. Frith did not let himself be put out of countenance; he boldly replied: In the hall, had he not seen him there? and with this answer he got off, for just at that moment Topcliffe's attention was diverted to something else.

When we had put my father to bed in the spacious room upstairs, beneath the very spot, as I already remarked, where the wonderful flower grew, Topcliffe took Windsor aside, and put a few questions to him. Immediately after, he announced his intention of quartering himself upon us, with all his men. For the latter beer was to be served in the hall, with bread and meat, or whatever else we had in the house; for himself, as he was tired out, he would sleep upon a sack of straw upstairs, it would be time enough next morning to make a thorough search in the house. Uncle Barthy, good old soul, volunteered to play

the host to our unbidden guests, while Uncle Remy took the young gentlemen to his own apartments. Grandmother and Anne withdrew into the adjoining chamber, to which there was no access except through the sick-room, where some easy chairs and cushions had been brought for their accommodation. At Windsor's request the door of communication was left open, so that they might be called in a moment, should any change take place in his patient's condition. I was to remain with my father during the first half of the night, to help nurse him and heat the poultices which were to be renewed upon his chest every quarter of an hour.

I must acknowledge that the quiet, modest behaviour of the young doctor did not fail to make a good impression upon me, and he soon won my confidence. I plucked up courage to ask him, when my father appeared to have fallen asleep, what he thought of his condition? He shrugged his shoulders and looking at me very gravely, said: "Miss Bellamy, the first words I speak to you shall not be calculated to deceive you, therefore my answer must be this: all things are possible to the God whom we serve, but medical skill can do nothing more for him."

These words, which struck sorrow to my heart, were said in so kind a manner that through the tears that filled my eyes, I looked gratefully at the young man. As soon as I could control myself, I asked how long he thought my father might live.

"A few days, perhaps even longer", he re-

plied. "But he may go off much sooner, if he has a fresh attack, as I fear he will."

"Then he is in immediate danger of death, and if it were possible, we ought to have him anointed?" I inquired.

He nodded assent. Then a sudden thought struck me. "Did that man—that Topcliffe—ask you about my father's state?" I said.

"He did"; was the reply, "and I told him his condition was most critical."

"Now I see through that wretch's design", I went on. "Listen to me. He suspects that the priest whom he wants to seize, is somewhere in the neighbourhood, or perhaps concealed in the house. He feels pretty certain that we shall risk everything for the sake of getting him for my father, that he may receive the last sacraments and be prepared for death, and he thinks he will thus entrap his victim. That is why he chose this room, which is quite at the top of the house and to which there is only one door, for the sick chamber; he means it to be a regular trap, and I have no doubt while some of his party are carousing in the hall, he has taken care to station others on the stairs, and is lying in wait himself close by, like a lynx on the watch for an unwary roebuck. You may be sure that is the reason why he would not allow us to take my father to his own apartment, which has three doors, and is in communication with a back staircase! I could not understand it at first, now it is as clear as day."

Windsor listened to me attentively and asked me a few questions, then he acknowledged I was

right. He went to the window, to ascertain, as far as the darkness would allow, at what height it was from the ground, asking what the rooms were below. I answered they were my grandmother's, my sister's and my own. "That is fortunate", he remarked. "And under them?"—"The library." "That again is well. The height from the ground will be at most some 35 or 40 feet," he continued, asking me did I know whether there was a ladder of that length on the premises? I replied that there was one at the stables which would reach up to the roof. But why all these questions? We could not tell the servants to bring the ladder and put it against the house, still less could we send them to fetch the priest. — At the mention of the priest, Windsor asked if he was perhaps hidden somewhere in the house, where one might get at him without attracting the notice of the pursuivants. I answered, no; he was most probably lying hidden in the old castle, not more than five minutes walk from here; my little brother Frith knew the place exactly.

After questioning me in this wise Windsor paced up and down the room a few times without speaking. Then he stopped and said to me in a low voice: "Miss Bellamy, I have made a plan, a somewhat venturesome one, but not, I think, impossible. In such a case as this one must be a little daring." He then asked me if I would help to get the priest into the house in defiance of Topcliffe, and this I promised to do most willingly, not indeed for the sake of defying Topcliffe, but for my poor father's spiritual benefit and consolation,

provided the scheme was not too impossible of execution. He replied that the only, or at least the chief difficulty that he foresaw was that of getting out of the window down into the garden; did I perhaps know whether there was a rope or a clothes line of sufficient length anywhere on the premises? I told him there was a clothes line hanging up in the laundry, and the laundry was not one of the outhouses, but under the roof, close to the kitchen. He begged me to endeavour to get the line, and bring it upstairs concealed under my frock, for if I could succeed in doing so, the first step would be taken in the accomplishment of our design. My little brother Frith could be gently lowered to the ground by means of the rope; he could cautiously conduct the priest to the house, and it would be easy for his Reverence to get into the room by means of the ladder, and administer extreme unction to the sick man.

I made all manner of objections to this scheme. First of all I said that it was out of the question for the priest, with no assistance but Frith's, to drag a heavy ladder to this spot, still more to plant it against the wall, while to wake the servants and get them to help would be incurring too great a risk. Windsor said he would himself slip down the rope and help the clergyman.—But what, I asked, was to be done if Topcliffe persisted in demanding admittance to the chamber whilst the priest was in it? — "Then we must bolt the door," Windsor replied, "until he had got down into the garden again, and the ladder was removed." One must trust somewhat to the help of Providence and

of the good angels. The priest would not be many minutes at his work, for under exceptional circumstances such as these the sacrament could be administered in a few brief words.

I was silent for a few minutes, thinking over the plan in my own mind. Then after an *Ave Maria*, said in secret, I inquired whether he had taken into consideration the fact he would be making himself accessory to an action punishable by law with the severest penalties, imprisonment or even worse? He looked up at me with a loyal, generous expression in his eyes, saying that were he condemned to eternal death for such a deed of Christian charity, he should rejoice to have been able to render this service to my father in his last illness. All my hesitation was now at an end: I forthwith took a lamp, to go down into the kitchen and fetch the rope, trusting to the divine protection. Windsor gave me some good advice as to what I should say if I met either Topcliffe or one of his myrmidons, and down stairs I went, although with a beating heart.

As I opened the door I fancied that the door of the opposite side moved slightly. As it was unoccupied, it struck me that Topcliffe or one of his men might be on the watch there, so I stepped up to it quickly, closed the door, locked it, for the key happened to be outside, and put the key into my pocket. Then I went on my way, as if it were the most natural thing in the world just to turn a key in a lock. On reaching the lowest step of the stairs, I all but stumbled on one of the pursuivants, and in my fright I uttered a scream, and

nearly let my lamp fall. The man who had been placed there to watch got up onto his feet, and asked me very crossly what I wanted there. I replied that I was obliged to go down to the kitchen, to fetch something the sick man needed, but what business had he to be sleeping on the staircase at night? I could find a more easy couch for him than that. He told me I had better ask Topcliffe, whom I must have met upstairs, what business he had to be there; then with a muttered oath he resumed his seat on the stairs, and leaning his head against the balusters, went off again into a heavy sleep, for he had evidently been drinking deeply.

Thus I discovered that my suspicions were well founded. Topcliffe was, in fact, guarding the approach to the staircase and the sickroom, with the design of seizing the priest in the act of administering the last sacraments. Had he not also stationed sentries outside the house as well? Certainly he might not consider that necessary, since he believed the priest to be already in the house. Yet it was possible, so I determined to step out of the kitchen door, which opened on to the garden, and just run round the castle. I perceived nothing unusual, so I went upstairs again, after I had secured the rope and fastened it beneath my dress. For appearances' sake, I carried with me a jar of electuary, and this time I managed to pass the sleeping guard without disturbing his slumbers. As I went by the door which I had locked, I thought I saw the handle turned, as if some one were endeavouring to open it from the

inside. It will readily be imagined that I was not disposed to assist him in this attempt.

Having got back in safety to the sick-room, my first question naturally was about my father. Windsor said his pulse was weaker, and his general condition such as not to justify us in putting off the anointing until the next night. I told him what I had done, and asked him whether it would not be the easier way to fetch the priest and bring him upstairs while the guard was asleep? After a few moments' deliberation he said that if, as was probable, Topcliffe was the individual I had locked in the adjacent room, he would make a very devil of a noise when he heard steps to and fro on the stairs, and knew the priest was being brought in. Or did I feel sure that the boy could get downstairs past the guard and out of the doors to summon the Father if he went barefoot and took no light with him?

We concluded that it would be best to let Frith himself answer this question; accordingly I went into the next room, where I found grandmother wide awake, while Anne and the boy had fallen fast asleep in their chairs. After telling grandmother what we meant to do, I tried to wake my brother. This was no easy task, for as soon as I got him to stand up, he almost fell down, his eyes were so heavy, and not till they had been bathed with cold water, could we make him understand what we wanted of him. But then a fresh obstacle presented itself, for it was impossible to persuade Frith to go alone and in the middle of the night to the old castle. The poor child began to cry, and

tell us about the black dog with fiery eyes which he saw at the crossways. I must acknowledge that a cold shiver ran over me on hearing this uncanny story, yet for my father's sake I did not hesitate to offer to accompany Frith on his mission. But Windsor, who saw from my face what an effort this would cost me, declared he would go with Frith, and to this my grandmother agreed.

Thereupon my future husband, who had already won my heart by his extreme kindness to my father, attached the cord, after he had made sure it would bear his weight, firmly to one of the mullions of the window. He then barred and bolted the door of the room; and, fastening the other end of the rope under the boy's arms, showed him how he must hold it, to prevent it from hurting his chest. He also enjoined upon him not to utter a sound, whatever might happen. After we had knelt down and said a prayer to his guardian angel, and grandmother had given the boy her blessing, Windsor let him down in the garden below. Then he gave me a few instructions as to the treatment of his patient, climbed out to the window sill, and deftly and noiselessly slid down the rope to where the boy was standing. As soon as they had both got clear off, we pulled in the rope, lest one of the pursuivants should perchance see it, and suspect what was in the wind.

We, waiting anxiously, counted the minutes as they slowly went by. My father grew restless, and from the symptoms we observed, we feared another attack was coming on, as Windsor had

predicted, which might carry him off. Half an hour had passed; grandmother took up her *Garden of the Soul*, and began to recite the Litany for a Happy Death, wherein all the saints of both the old and the new dispensation are called upon to stand by the departing soul in her last agony, and conduct her to the regions of light. In a voice broken by sobs I answered the responses, listening meanwhile to my father's laboured breathing, and endeavouring to catch the first sound from the garden below that might intimate to us the coming of the priest. I could not help feeling greatly alarmed; I had given my father the largest dose of medicine that Windsor had permitted me to administer, and instead of tranquilising him, as it was intended to do, it had the effect of increasing his restlessness. As yet there was no sign of the much longed for visitor; was it possible that Frith had lost his way in the dark, or had some unforeseen accident occurred? Perhaps the whole party had fallen into the hands of one of Topcliffe's patrols? These and many other possible contingencies crowded into my mind and every moment my hopes grew fainter.

Nor was this all; something fresh happened which led me almost to despair of the success of our enterprise. The man whom I had locked into the opposite room, weary of his solitary confinement, or perhaps suspecting that some project was on foot, began knocking at the door, and asking to be let out. At first he knocked gently and spoke in a low tone, but I immediately recognized the voice as Topcliffe's. Acting on im-

pulse, I flung the key out of the window with all my might in the direction of the pond. I heard it fall with a splash into the water, and at the same time a slight sound coming from the stables reached my ear. What it was I could not determine, for just then Topcliffe began to hammer the door with his boots and call lustily on his followers to come to his help.

What was to be done! I almost regretted having locked the man in, and thrown away the key, for the noise he was making was enough to bring all of his men round the door, and then what would be the fate of the priest, should he arrive at this juncture? And even as these thoughts passed through my mind, I heard footsteps on the pebbles beneath the window, and at the same moment the top of the ladder appeared at the casement. Anne, too, aroused from her sleep by the disturbance Topcliffe made, now rushed into the room, startled and confused, inquiring what was the matter? Before I could explain the situation to her, Windsor stepped in through the open window. He had heard Topcliffe's shouts in the garden below, and naturally wanted to ascertain what had passed in his absence, before exposing the priest to the danger of losing his life, and that perhaps uselessly. Just as Windsor entered, I heard voices outside the door; Uncle Remy, Barthy, Babington and others were asking Topcliffe what he was thinking of, to make such an infernal noise close to the chamber where a man lay dying. In answer to his rejoinder Uncle Remy was heard to bid him for God's sake be quiet, and search should be made

for the missing key. Windsor overheard these words, and whispered to me: "That will give us a few moments' respite, we must lose no time."

Thereupon he returned to the window and gave a signal; a few seconds later Father Weston, with his assistance, stepped in over the window sill. Never shall I forget the serenity of that saintly man's countenance, unruffled either by the strange manner whereby he had gained admittance, or by the great peril to which he was exposing himself in the performance of his sacred functions. Only a few yards off Topcliffe, who seemed to know by intuition that a hated priest was near, as a hawk descries from afar an innocent dove, began to rage and bellow anew, while the gentle voice of God's minister pronounced the salutation which the Church places on the lips of the priest on his entrance into the sick-room: *Pax huic domui et omnibus habitantibus in ea.* When dropping the brush into the vessel of holy water which grandmother held out to him, he sprinkled the bed and the sufferer. Singular to relate, at that moment my father, who had been lying in a state of unconsciousness, with closed eyes, looked up, and glancing at all the bystanders, beckoned to the priest to come to his side. We withdrew into the adjoining room while he made his confession; it did not take long, for my father had made his Easter only a fortnight before, and we were soon summoned to his bedside, where preparations were being made to anoint him. Kneeling down, we recited the responses to the prayers, said calmly but rapidly by the priest, since the uproar outside

the door was increasing every moment, Windsor urged him to be quick, for in vain did he beg the pursuivants, with whom Uncle Remy and Babington were parleying, to make less noise out of consideration for a man at the point of death. Accordingly, as soon as Father Weston had anointed my father, he gave him the last absolutions, omitting the other prayers prescribed by the ritual, held the crucifix to his lips, exhorted him to place his whole trust in the mercy of God, and then in answer to our entreaties that he would no longer thus imperil his life, got out of the window, descended the ladder and disappeared in the darkness.

It was not a moment too soon, for when Uncle Remy and Uncle Barthy heard Windsor say that father was dying, they besought him to let them in. So when we had moved the ladder to one side, closed the window, and hidden the rope under the bed, we opened the door. Large as the room was, it was quickly filled; my uncles, the gentlemen staying in the house and the servants, stood or knelt with us around the bed, while the pursuivants looked on stolidly from a distance. For a time my father lay motionless, his countenance expressive of heavenly peace, listening to the prayers his mother recited in a low voice.

Presently he beckoned Anne and myself to his side, laid his hand in benediction upon our heads. Seeing that his eyes wandered in search of little Frith, I whispered to him that the boy was not there, and from his look of intelligence I knew that he understood that he was gone to conduct the priest back to his hiding place. Pressing his

good old mother's hand, he thanked her for all the love she had shown him; he also bade his brothers an affectionate farewell, commending us especially to Uncle Remy's care. To each of the servants standing sobbing around he addressed a kind word; then making one last effort, he raised the hand which held the crucifix, and murmured, in accents that were scarcely audible: "Hold fast the ancient faith, the true faith! Hold it fast, every one of you." He tried to add something more, I think about meeting again in heaven, but we could not catch the words. His arm dropped on to the coverlet and his last agony began.

Sounds of lamentation and weeping, words of prayer were heard on all sides; even the pursuivants were touched, and those who were engaged in breaking open Topcliffe's door, desisted for a while. Even at this distance of time, the remembrance of that scene makes me shed tears.

On the 21st of April, at break of day, my dear father breathed his last. As through the tears that blinded me, I glanced upwards from his beloved countenance, I noticed that one of the five buds of the wonderful flower on the ceiling above had opened, and blossomed out into a delicate little red flower.

CHAPTER VI.

My Wife tells of Topcliffe's wrath; her Cousin Page's cowardly conduct; and the arrest of her brother and sister.

We had little leisure in which to indulge our grief. Perhaps it was well that it was so; in my case at least, anxiety concerning Frith and the good priest certainly did much to assuage my sorrow for the death of my dear father. While grandmother and Anne still knelt weeping at the bedside, I acquainted Uncle Remy, in as few words as possible with what had taken place, and he slipped out and went down into the garden, to remove the ladder and to ascertain whether the entrance to the secret passage leading to the old castle, which was in the garden wall behind the barn, had been properly barred again, and completely concealed by a pile of faggots.

It was not long before the oaken panels of the door of the room where Topcliffe was imprisoned gave way, and he burst in upon us, like a mad bull. In all my life I never saw a man in such a fury; he was quite white, and foaming at the mouth. Even the solemn presence of death, which generally overawes the rudest of mankind, had no effect on him. He rolled his bloodshot eyes round the room, in search of a victim on whom to vent his wrath, finally fixing on my sister Anne. "It was you who locked me in!" he shrieked out at her; "It was you who turned the key and took it out! It is your doing that I could not catch the

son of Belial, who this very night sped that stubborn Papist on his way to hell! You and all your accomplices shall pay heavily for this!"

He actually went so far as to seize Anne by the hair of her head and call upon his myrmidons to handcuff her. A terrible uproar ensued. Babington drew his sword, and his friends followed his example. He declared he would not stand by and see a young lady of rank maltreated in the presence of her father's corpse; and if it cost him his life, his good sword should be the means of sending Topcliffe to the judgment seat of God, and he would answer for the deed before the Queen's tribunal. Seeing the young man meant what he said, Topcliffe hastened to leave go of Anne, for the bully is proverbially a coward. Retreating to where his own men stood, he bade them disarm the young gentlemen, and the scene would have been one of bloodshed and violence, had not Uncle Barthy, good old soul, interfered between Babington and Topcliffe's followers. He entreated them to keep the peace, saying never would he or his friends use force to prevent her Majesty's commissioners from fulfilling their duty; let them make inquiry, and if it was found that Anne, or any one else had transgressed the law, the culprit should undergo the penalty of his offence, even though the law was an unjust one, in imitation of the early martyrs who had submitted to the decrees of the heathen Emperors. At the same time he warned the Queen's servant not to make any misuse of his power, for by doing so he would bring odium on the Government. With these pacific words, Uncle

Barthy induced Babington to sheathe his sword again, and Topcliffe, furious though he was, took himself a little in hand, and spoke in an altered key. And when he told Babington that he should charge him before the Secretary of State, for having dared to draw his sword against an officer of the Crown in the discharge of his duty, and wanted to interrogate him then and there, we prevailed upon him to adjourn to the hall, and institute the proceedings there. Thither therefore we all betook ourselves.

First of all, Topcliffe let fly against Anne, asserting that he had seen her come out of my father's room and from malice prepense, turn the lock on him. As we were dressed alike, it is most probable that he mistook me for my sister. Of course Anne denied this, and declared — what was moreover quite true — that during the whole night she had not quitted the chamber for a single instant. It was all no use, since Topcliffe asseverated that through the chink of the door, he had with his own eyes seen her rush, like a fury, at the handle, and for such an insult against the Queen's Commissioner she must go with him as his prisoner to London, there to answer for her conduct before the Privy Council. My poor sister could not make as light of this as she did of most things; indeed, she was more ready to cry than to laugh.

I therefore stepped boldly forward and owned that I had been the one to lock the door, and that when I did so, I was not aware of Topcliffe's presence within the room. (This was no departure from the truth, since I did not know, but only

suspected that he was there.) The man glared at me, burst into a hoarse laugh, saying he did not believe I was capable of playing him such a trick, but he had no doubt I should not hesitate to tell a lie, to get my sister out of a scrape. Where was I going to, he inquired, and what did I want on the stairs? I replied, that I had gone down into the kitchen to fetch something that was required for my father, and that the soldier who was on guard at the foot of the staircase could bear witness that it was I, not my sister, who had passed by him. Topcliffe immediately had the man called in; but whether he had not yet slept off the fumes of liquor, or whether he saw what Topcliffe wished him to say, at any rate, he asserted it to be his conviction that the young lady, who nearly stumbled over him last night was not so tall as myself. Thereupon Topcliffe without further questioning arrested my sister in the Queen's name. Anne burst out crying; I appealed to Windsor to give evidence that I, not she, had left the room. All in vain; Topcliffe denounced us all as a lot of lying Papists and said he believed the testimony of his own eyes and his watchman's before that of our tongues. Having delivered my sister over to the charge of two halberdiers, he proceeded to announce that, as it was now broad daylight, he intended to make a thorough search of the house and garden. He was quite certain he said that in the course of the aforegoing night, a mass priest had been with the sick man, and he could not now be very far off. Seeing a bunch of keys hanging at my waist-band, he ordered me to go with him.

Resistance was useless; consequently while the rest of the party remained under surveillance in the hall, I was compelled to accompany the odious creature, with half a dozen of the most cunning of his satellites, upstairs and downstairs, into every corner and cranny of the house; standing by, an unwilling spectator, while every door was unlocked, every wall measured, and every part that appeared suspiciously thick struck with a hammer to ascertain whether it sounded hollow, and might conceal a secret chamber. I was quite afraid that the principal hiding place would be discovered. There was no one in it, it is true, but its disclosure would have brought us into sad trouble. For full five minutes Topcliffe stood on the stone under the back stairs, which concealed a subway into the barn hard by, where Brother —— a lay Jesuit, very clever at concealment, had contrived a capital hiding place. However this time our tormentor did not succeed in routing anything out; the failure did not improve his temper, and very crossly he made me a sign to accompany him to the garden and outbuildings.

In the barn and woodshed he thrust his sword recklessly in and out of the trusses of hay and straw and between the piles of firewood, bidding his men to toss the faggots from one corner to another. Still nothing was found, and I began to think the work was over, when he caught sight of the ladders, hanging from wooden pegs outside the stables. It happened that the smaller ladder was only suspended from one peg, so that it hung awry one end resting on the ground. As everything

else was in the most perfect order, thanks to old John's care, this little piece of carelessness struck Topcliffe, and he went close up to the ladders. Thus he was led to notice some fresh garden mould adhering to the foot of the larger ladder. "Hullo!" he exclaimed, "it is Gospel truth, this ladder has been used, and within a few hours too! Now I know the way that accursed mass priest got into the old fool's room. What do you say to that, Miss Bellamy?"

What indeed could I say? In my confusion I could only stammer something about the ladder being in use for all manner of purposes. Topcliffe laughed contemptuously. "Of course," he said in his sneering way, "we understand this ladder nearly 50 foot long, was wanted last night to gather the priest off the dwarf pear trees yonder, that are now just in blossom! May I have the pleasure, Miss Bellamy, of conducting you to the spot where that ladder was planted two or three hours ago? Let me see, which gable window was it? Ah, I see. Allow me."

He advanced towards me with a smile; I put his proffered arm aside indignantly, whereat he only laughed, and said I was really quite as amiable as my sister; but never fear, he would yet devise the means to cure us of our uppishness.

When we got to the place beneath the window, he triumphantly pointed out the holes in the ground made by the foot of the ladder, asking me if I could still persist in my denial! I answered nothing. Then he looked at a bed of tulips that was trampled down, and in which several flowers

were broken off. "What a pity," he said sarcastically. "Do you not think, Miss Bellamy, that people should be rather more careful? The ladder might have been stood on the gravel path, then your flowers would not have been spoilt. Besides the footprints would not have been seen, as they are so very plainly in the soft mould. Just look here—these huge marks must have been made by your worthy uncle's great boots; those there are the traces of the Jesuit, on whose head—mark you—a prize of £100 is set. Let me take the exact measure, one never knows how it may come in useful. Well, the good man does not appear to wear shoes of the latest fashion. Now here are some of a very different style and shape; one of the young gentlemen staying in your house must have been here, or some other abettor of the priest; these ministers of Baal never lack a gallowsbird in their train. But how do these pretty little footprints come here? They are almost too small to be yours, my young lady, nor are they quite like a gentlewoman's shoe. Oh! I have it! they belong to the dear little lad who whispered in his sister's ear so sweetly last night on the stair: It is all right. True enough, it is all right, I can say that now; for since I have got these threads in my hand, I will not let them slip from my grasp, but out of them we will form a rope, a rope to fit the Jesuit's neck. By my troth, here comes the little man himself, just as we were speaking of him!"

As ill luck would have it, at that moment Uncle Remy appeared round the corner of the house, holding the boy by the hand. I saw the

exultant look Topcliffe gave them, and tried to give them a sign to warn them to beat a hasty retreat. But it was already too late. Topcliffe asked them quite civilly to come where we were standing; as soon as they did so, he seized hold of Frith's arm, and asked him whose were the footprints in that flower bed? The child looked at me with a frightened expression in his blue eyes, but he answered sturdily: these were the footprints of a good many people. This reply cost him several hard cuffs from Topcliffe, who then lifted him up and stood him down in the flowerbed; but Frith, guessing his design, defeated it by scraping the earth with his feet, so as to obliterate all traces of his having been there. This made Topcliffe very spiteful, he pulled the poor little fellow's hair unmercifully.

But one might go too far with Frith. He was a good, gentle child as long as he was treated kindly, but if he thought anyone was unjust to him, he could show himself a true Bellamy by his obstinacy, for we are known to come of a stubborn race. Frith set his teeth and looked at his tormentor with angry defiance, but he did not utter a word, even when Topcliffe boxed his ears so hard that the tears started to his eyes, saying: "None of your insolence for me, if you please! You little know me. I have taught many other birds to sing besides fledglings like you!"

"You ought to be ashamed of yourself, Master Topcliffe," exclaimed Uncle Remy, "for striking a lad like that. I will not permit it." "Who asks you for permission?" the scoundrel rejoined. Then calling one of his men, he bade him cut him

a stout switch from a willow tree. When this was brought to him, he trimmed it with his dirk, and whirled it round twice or thrice in the air with a whistling sound; then flourishing it over poor Frith's head, he addressed him thus: "Now Master Frith, my name is Topcliffe, and you may perhaps have heard I have been the means of bringing many hundreds to the gallows, or what is worse, to the rack. I am not a man to be trifled with. Now listen to me: Last night that very ladder was brought here, and by it the Jesuit Edmund climbed up to the gable window yonder. I know very well that you, my young master, brought the Jesuit here, and you conducted him home again; so you know now, where he is hidden. Pay heed to what I say: I am going to count five and twenty, quite slowly; and if by the time I have done, you do not tell me where the Jesuit has put himself, I will lay this switch about you so soundly that you will not know whether you stand on your head or your heels, and will be ready to tell me all I want to know. Lay the young gentleman on the garden seat, and hold him down; that is right. Now I am going to begin: one—two—"

"Master Topcliffe, what are you thinking of?" interposed Uncle Remy. "Do you imagine that a child like that would be told where a Catholic priest is concealed?"

"Five—six," the man went on.

"Never fear, Uncle Remy, I will not let him know it if he should cut me to pieces."

"There now, the young villain confesses he knows it! Eight—nine."

"Stop that!" cried Uncle Remy, "whatever I have to suffer for it. I will not stand by and see the boy flogged. You are exceeding your powers." So saying he wrested the switch out of Topcliffe's hand, broke it to pieces, and flung it on the ground.

The tyrant shouted to his men to seize and bind Uncle Remy, but he was a powerful man, and easily shook off the two who laid hands on him. Snatching a pike from a third, he swung it about him with such effect, that all his antagonists retreated, their leader among them, and the two that were holding Frith down on the garden seat, let him go free. Quick as thought the child sprang to his feet, slipped between the legs of the men with astounding dexterity, and would have made good his escape, had not cousin Page most inopportunely appeared on the scene with some armed retainers and thus stopped him in his flight.

This cousin Page was my grandmother's nephew, and like all the rest of our family, a staunch Catholic at heart, although he had conformed to the new form of worship, in order to evade the exorbitant fines that were reducing all our Catholic families in turn to beggary. Alas! it is through weakness such as his, that our beloved island has been bereft of her choicest heirloom, the true Faith; because the greater number of the nobility and gentry for the sake of retaining their property, complied with the will of their ruler, in the conviction that better times must come, when they would again openly profess their ancient creed. Fools indeed were they, and forgetful of our Lord's words: No servant can serve two masters;

you cannot serve God and mammon. Thus all who would not forego mammon gradually lost the inestimable treasure of the Faith.

Cousin Page came up puffing and red in the face like a turkey cock, for he was a corpulent man, and had been walking quickly. As soon as he saw us he cried out: "Cousin Bellamy, cousin Mary, I have just heard that my cousin Richard died last night. I am sorry, heartily sorry for you both. He was a good man, but headstrong like all the rest of you, and by his culpable obstinacy he has ruined his fine estate. But what is up now? By my troth, that is Master Topcliffe! I wish you good morning! Another domiciliary visit to my stubborn popish relations — eh? what are you after, my lad? Stop him, men, stop him."

These last words were addressed to Frith, who begged to be released, or the wicked man would beat him to death. Our unhappy relative, whose dastardly conduct may God forgive, listened to Topcliffe, and brought the struggling boy back. As soon as he learnt the state of affairs, he said: "A nice story this, Cousin Bellamy! In defiance of law, Parliament, Privy Council, and the express will and pleasure of our gracious Queen, whom may God long preserve for England's weal, you introduced a priest into the house and harboured him there! And only the day before yesterday the Court of Justice at Westminster inflicted on our Cousin Robert for the very same offence no greater penalty than a fine of £1,000 and eighteen month's imprisonment! Do you not think that the learned members of the Privy Council, irritated by your

continued obstinacy, and the repetition of your offence, after you having received such lenient treatment at their hands, will be disposed to punish you with the utmost rigor of the law? Suppose the statute *Praemunire* is put in force against Woxindon, and the whole estate with goods and chattels, moveable and immoveable property, is confiscated to the Crown or to Lord Burghley! It is a good thing that I have to some extent provided against this. Come into the hall with me, for with Mr. Topcliffe's permission, I have an important communication to make to my Aunt Bellamy, and her children and grandchildren. As for the priest who is supposed to be hidden here, I shall, as beseems a loyal Englishman, offer no opposition to Mr. Topcliffe, on the contrary, I shall render her Majesty's servants all the assistance in my power, that law and justice may take its course."

This expression of my cousin's intentions was not very pleasant for us. I must, however, say this for him, that he seemed thoroughly ashamed of himself, and did not venture to look us in the face. We followed him to the hall without a word, for we thought this the most dignified course, we could pursue; meanwhile, Topcliffe had bound Frith's hands together with a cord which he fastened to his own belt.

On entering the hall, Cousin Page saluted his aunt, our dear grandmother, muttering a few words of sympathy for the loss of her oldest son, then clearing his throat, with some embarrassment of manner he began to say that, since he knew his deceased cousin to suffer from heart complaint, he

had foreseen that he could not live long, and therefore, out of his warm affection and care for our family—ill required though it was on our part—he had taken measures before the Privy Council to prevent Woxindon from being lost to us, or at any rate from going out of the family. He had at last been successful, he said, not without the cost of much trouble to himself, in procuring a document which he had with him, to which was affixed the signature of the Lord Treasurer and the Secretary of State, and the royal seal. Drawing from his breast pocket a roll of parchment, carefully wrapped in silk, he opened it, reverently kissed the Queen's effigy upon the great seal, and read the contents aloud to us. I cannot of course recall the wording of the document, but I know the gist of the longwinded periods and elaborate phraseology was this: That the Queen, in case of our father's premature decease, created her beloved and faithful servant Sir Richard Page, guardian of Woxindon, with full und unlimited powers over the estate, in consideration of the fact that our uncles Bartholomew, Robert and Jeremy were notorious and stubborn Papists. Moreover, on account of his loyal sentiments, the said Sir Richard Page was to become the sole and entire proprietor of the estate of Woxindon, unless within six months from the present date, we should determine to abjure the abomination of the Papacy, and from thenceforward diligently attend divine service established by the Queen, the rightful head of the English Church.

When my cousin had finished reading this document, there was perfect silence for a few

moments. Then grandmother stood up and said, with a look that I shall never forget, but with perfect calmness of manner: "Nephew, I pray God that on the day when you must abandon all your earthly possessions, and must appear, as my son Richard did last night, before the judgment seat, that your treachery, and the document you have just read to us, the price of your treachery, may not occasion you bitter remorse."

Thereupon Page declared he had not acted in this way for his own sake, but for ours; it depended upon us alone whether we kept Woxindon or no. For the matter of that however, almost every stone on the estate was mortgaged to him, in consequence of our wilfulness, and the enormous fines our late father had incurred. We had always set his warnings at naught, and always, as at the present time, instead of thanking him as he deserved, rewarded him with the blackest ingratitude.

What the man said made little or no impression upon our guests and such of the servants who were present, let alone ourselves: indeed we felt heartily ashamed of him. He had to content himself with the congratulations he received from Topcliffe, who wished him joy and shook him warmly by the hand. When Babington saw him take the blood-stained hand of the pursuivant, he could not restrain his indignation and disgust; no man of honour, he said, would henceforth call Sir Richard Page his friend, since he had lowered himself by this familiarity with the hangman's accomplice.

At this Topcliffe began to storm and bluster,

threatening us with dire revenge. Babington boldly replied that he should be happy to answer all his accusations on the morrow in the presence of Sir Francis Walsingham, to whom he had letters of introduction from high quarters. He was then only waiting to know what were Topcliffe's intentions in regard to Miss Bellamy and her little brother, in order that he might report this abuse of his powers to the Secretary of State, for he did not believe him authorized to arrest women and children.

"I shall most certainly take both of them with me to London as prisoners." Topcliffe rejoined with a diabolical laugh, "if they do not forthwith reveal the hiding place of the accursed Priest of Belial."

Anne immediately said that she really did not know it, and would not tell if she did; while Frith declared he knew it, and nothing would induce him to betray it, whatever might be done to him.

Then, though it went hard with me to do so, I appealed to Richard Page, and besought him, in his official capacity as mayor, himself to take Anne under arrest, rather than let Topcliffe drag her away to one of the horrible London prisons. But like the craven coward that he was, he answered in the words of Pontius Pilate, that he washed his hands of the matter, and would leave justice to take its course.

Almost immediately after Topcliffe gave the signal for departure to his men. He scarcely allowed Anne, who was crying with grief and rage, and Frith, who kept a brave countenance, time to bid grandmother and me good-bye, before he hur-

ried them away in the midst of his guard, the servants following them with sobs and tears. Poor old Bosgrave was almost beside herself for sorrow, at seeing her dear children driven out of the house where their father lay dead.

That was a terrible day, indeed! I cried till I could cry no longer, but nothing was of any use. I really do not remember what else happened that day. I only know that the six young gentlemen who were with us took their leave, for they said they would accept no hospitality from Page, and that Windsor, who had been of such great assistance to us during the preceding night, said all he could think of to console me, and at parting asked if he might be permitted to call and ask for us. I cannot recollect what I answered him, for I felt quite bewildered with tears and anguish of heart.

CHAPTER VII.

The six young gentlemen receive a timely warning, and the gentle reader learns something more concerning their projects.

Hitherto I have left the part of narrator to my wife, although from the commencement of the third chapter, from the time that is of my arrival at Woxindon, I was myself in a position to relate a great part, or indeed all, of what occurred. However she told her tale so faithfully and so well, that I was fain to let her continue speaking; and I shall be content if I can give equal satisfaction to the reader, now that it is my turn to record events of which she was not a witness. On this point at any rate my narrative will bear comparison with hers; in the perfect truth and accuracy of every statement. One thing I must add to what she has already said: I remember quite well, what my dear Mary professes to have forgotten, that she gave me permission most graciously, to visit Woxindon again, nay even smiled through her tears as she did so, as a gleam of sunshine sometimes breaks out through a shower.

As we were riding through St. John's Wood, when we had got about half way to London, we overtook Topcliffe and his troop, with their two unfortunate prisoners. Babington and some others who were with me would liked to have drawn their swords and set them free, and bring Topcliffe to the nearest tree, a fate he richly deserved. But Tichbourne and I prevailed upon our companions

not to engage in such a desperate attempt, which would have brought us all to the gallows and done no good. So we rode on our way, only as we passed, bidding the young lady and the boy keep good heart, for we would see that they were soon set at liberty.

Our way led through St. Giles-in-the-Fields, where in earlier times a small church had been erected in honour of the saint, a favourite resort of pious Londoners. Now in these changed times no pilgrim wended his way thither. But though the sanctuary was neglected, the stately hostelry of the *Blue Boar*, standing in the midst of green meadows, shaded by ancient oaks, was still much frequented. This inn was famous not only for its good beer and fiery wines, but also as a place where arrangements were made for several of the national sports, such as rackets, foot-ball, races, archery, shooting, and above all, cock-fighting, in which hundreds of pounds were lost and won in the course of a year. The host himself kept about a dozen game-cocks of a special breed, one of which he would pit against any cock brought to the house. We six young fellows were well known guests at this hostelry, for we had almost all well filled purses, and did not look twice at a crown piece or a rose-noble. Ever since the previous autumn it had been our habit to meet one evening every week at the *Blue Boar*, where we engaged a room in the upper story, whereto no one else was admitted. Very weighty matters were discussed between those four walls!

As we were passing through St. Giles on our way to London, Babington, who, contrary to his

custom, had been the most silent of our party, suddenly pulled up, and said: "Let us turn in at the *Blue Boar*. I have a proposal to make to you fellows after supper." To this we agreed, and a few moments later we dismounted at the door under the spreading oaks. Little did we then suspect what scenes those oaks, not as yet in their vernal garb, would witness, before the tender green leaves, just ready to burst their buds under the influence of the April sunshine, would in their turn be sere and yellow!

Before proceeding further with my narrative, I must go back a space, and speak of the consultations that were held and the resolutions taken in the aforesaid upper room in the *Blue Boar* in the course of the last winter. My friendship with Babington and the others of our party dated from the Oxford days; during my absence in Italy they had formed a sort of association, into which I was instantly admitted on my return to London last autumn. The principal object of our meetings was, in addition to the services which we as good Catholics could render to our clergy, the enjoyment of pleasant intercourse with congenial companions, and the innocent amusements suited to our age and position, such as rowing, riding, hunting, tennis and archery. Now we should have proved ourselves very poor Catholics, if the subject of our confidential conversations had not often been the lamentable status of the Church in England, the terrible persecution which brought priests to the block and the laity to beggary. We used to debate whether there was no means of at least alleviating

such deplorable misery; the only hope of better things, the only star in this stygian gloom, was as far as we could see, the imprisoned Queen Mary Stuart, the legitimate heir to the English throne. Neither her troubles and sufferings in Scotland, nor her captivity of eighteen years duration in England, had induced her to swerve one hairs-breadth from her fidelity to the Catholic Church. Would that she were on the throne which was now unworthily filled by the daughter of Henry VIII. and Anne Boleyn! Thoughts such as these occupied our minds, and gradually took the shape of a well considered plan.

On the evening of the Epiphany 1586, we were holding one of our pleasant meetings in the parlour of the *Blue Boar*. Babington had ordered a large cake to be baked with a bean in it, after the French fashion; whoever found the bean in his portion was king for the evening. A good supply of wine from the sunny vineyards of Spain was on the table; when the cake was cut, the bean fell to Babington's lot, so we paid him homage amid laughter and merry jests.

"We have got a new king for the nonce," cried I, "would that we had a new queen too."

"You have forestalled me in what I was going to say," answered Babington; "God knows, Elizabeth is no more a true queen than I am a true king."

Then we grew grave, and Tichbourne exclaimed: "Take care what you say, the host might overhear you. An expression like that would count as high treason, and I for one have no wish to feel

the hangman's rope round my neck, for not having given information of a rash word spoken by my friends!"

"What I said is quite true," Babington rejoined. "Elizabeth's birth gives her no claim to the crown, and besides this, she has been formally deposed by the Pope, so that we owe her no allegiance. In fact the bull of Pius V. originally declared those persons to be excommunicated who declared her to be the rightful Queen, and obeyed her as such. I am quite aware that in consequence of the representations made to him by the Jesuits, the present occupant of St. Peter's Chair has modified this statement; but the bill of deposition was not revoked, and if circumstances permitted, we should still have the right to obey our Holy Father's command."

"Yes, if circumstances permitted!" interposed Barnewell. "But we know very well they do not permit it. And therefore a truce to these wearisome speeches on politics, that spoil our merry-making. Pass the bottle, Babington."

"These speeches, as you please to term a few sensible remarks, might lead to something practical, if there were a dozen young men like minded with ourselves," remarked Salisbury.

"If we six only had sufficient pluck," said Babington, "we might with one bold stroke save England from being lost to the Faith, and obtain eternal renown for ourselves."

"I devoutly hope you mean nothing of this sort for Elizabeth," said Tichbourne with a significant gesture. "For if you do, I shall leave the

room forthwith, I will not be accessory to any such crime, I will not even hear it spoken of."

"Listen to my proposal," rejoined Babington, "before you fire up in that way. As you know, towards the close of the year I went down to my place in Derbyshire. On the morning of Christmas Eve my steward came to me quite breathless, with the intelligence that Mary Stuart was to be removed from Tutbury, where under the charge of Sir Ralph Sadler, she had been comparitively well treated, to Chartley, near Barton. The Privy Council had appointed Sir Amias Paulet, a rabid Puritan, to be her jailer, and it was whispered abroad, that it would go ill with her there, in fact that an end would soon be put to her days. I must make haste, he said, if I wanted to see her; about noon she was expected to pass through Staleycross. I mounted my horse at once and rode the few miles to the spot. All the neighbourhood was on foot; hundreds of people were standing in groups on the highroad, in the driving snow, to see the captive Queen pass by, so greatly was she beloved for her kindness to the poor, and venerated on account of her angelic patience. At last the mournful procession came by; it consisted of fifty troopers in whose midst rode Mary Stuart with Sir Ralph at her side, and her men and maidservants close behind. Just as she reached the cross, a gleam of wintry sunshine broke through the clouds, and rested on the group of riders. The Queen was dressed in black, and seemed scarcely able to sit upright in her saddle, yet she threw back her long

veil and smiled kindly at the country people, many of whom were weeping. How immensely she had altered in appearance, since I was her page at Sheffield Castle! She was then a picture of beauty, the loveliest woman I had ever seen; now her long captivity had greatly aged her, she looked like a withered and faded flower. I heard a burly peasant behind me say: "Ay, poor soul, she wont last much longer." And another answered: "What would you have, gossip, buried alive as she has been all these years! And people do say, she will have it much worse now than in that cold damp hole, Chartley. Sir Amias Paulet is not the one to make any man's bed softer. I would not give a dog to the care of such as he. But last Sunday I heard the new preacher in the 'Mayflower' say that was just what the Privy Council wanted with this Moabitess—so he called her—that she should be done to death at last. For as long as this Stuart is alive, the Papists will have ground for hope, and the new religion as well as the Queen will be in danger."

Such were the opinions expressed by the peasants, while Mary Stuart rode by, bowing graciously in acknowledgement of the greetings she received. I said to myself: These rustics are perfectly right! That is exactly what Burghley and Walsingham are aiming at, the death of our rightful sovereign! It is true that while she lives, there is still some chance for us. Then I thought, what cowards we Catholics are! Are there really not half-a-dozen men to be found amongst us ready to risk their lives for the life of this royal princess, on whom

our last hope rests? Then I remembered you, Brothers, and I determined to propose to you that together we should attempt, ay and accomplish also, this noble, this truly chivalrous deed. What say you? Will you or will you not? And as sure as I am a living man, if your courage fails you, I have sworn alone and singlehanded to rescue the illustrious Mary Stuart from the men who are murdering her by inches!"

Babington spoke with such feeling and animation, that he awoke in us the same enthusiasm. All who were present sprang to their feet, and grasping his hand, shouted: "We will join you! Hurrah for Mary Stuart! We will risk life and lands to set her free!"

And so it came to pass that on that Feast of the Epiphany the generous resolve was taken unanimously that we six young noblemen under Babington's leadership, should undertake at all risks to liberate the Queen of Scots from prison and from the hands of her enemies. We were stimulated to do this, it must be acknowledged, to a great extent, by the bond lately formed under Leicester for the defence of Elizabeth, who certainly stood far less in need of protection than her unhappy rival.

From that day forth our confabulations, when we met at the *Blue Boar*, were for the most part about the means of carrying out our project. The chief difficulty was this: If the prisoner were set free, where could a place of safety be found for her? At any rate, it must be abroad, therefore in March Babington went to Paris, to ask counsel on this point of some of Mary Stuart's best friends, who

were then residing there; the Archbishop of Glasgow, Mendoza, the former Spanish Ambassador, Morgan, and others. The universal opinion was that her place of refuge must be in France; but they all begged him, while they commended his scheme, to defer the execution of it for a time, since it must be carried out in concert with another scheme, which they were elaborating, and of which they hoped shortly to give us the details.

In the week after Easter Babington returned and reported to us what had been said. It was agreed amongst us, that before any steps were taken, we would each one of us set his affairs in order, both temporal and spiritual, since on so hazardous an enterprise as that whereto we were pledged, we held our lives in our hand. We also determined to be present in a body at the execution of the two priests, which was already spoken of as certain, in order to see with our own eyes the fate possibly in store for us. It was for the purpose of making our Easter confession to Father Weston that we repaired to Woxindon. The circumstances that prevented us from doing so have already been told by my wife. This brings me back to that evening in April, when we dismounted at the door of the *Blue Boar* in St. Giles.

Mine host came out to receive us, bowing and smirking, while the ostler took our horses away to the stable. "Fie, gentlemen," he said, "what long faces I see on this lovely Spring day! Please to walk up to your room upstairs and drown your cares in a goblet of good wine. I have just received a new consignment from the Rhine; Deidesheimer,

like molten gold, soft to the palate, but fire in your veins. Or would some old Bourdeaux please you? If you ask my advice, sirs, I think there is nothing comes up to a bowl of stiff, well brewed punch."

Rambling on after this fashion, the host led the way into the house. Babington, the leader of the little band, cut him short, bidding him to send up the best supper he could provide, for we had not yet dined; after that we would do honour to his choice wines.

The room in which we found ourselves was not very spacious, but pleasant and scrupulously clean. The two windows looked out upon the green, with the oak trees; the only ornament on the walls was a pen-and-ink drawing by Tichbourne, which consisted of our six heads, surrounded by wreaths of laurel. As likenesses, they were not at all bad, for nature had gifted Tichbourne with talent for all the fine arts. I can see that ill-fated picture now; Anthony Babington, our chief, occupied the centre, with his handsome, daring face, not exempt from a touch of vanity. The other five were arranged around him; Tichbourne's portrait was next to me, for we were united by a similarity of tastes as well as by mutual affection. Beneath the whole Babington had inscribed the lines:

Hi mihi sunt comites, quos ipsa pericula jungunt.

These are my comrades, united to me by a common danger.

We shall presently see that this verse was not chosen at random.

We were soon seated round the oaken table, and did full justice to the excellent viands placed before us. When my friend Tichbourne had said grace, (his habit of always performing this duty led us jestingly to call him 'the parson') and the cloth had been removed, the host himself brought in a round, highly ornamented flagon, which he set upon the table. He then took out of a cupboard six silver goblets, and filled them one after another, ending with a glass for himself. "Your health, good sirs," he said. "May you experience the truth of what Holy Scripture says, that wine cheers the heart of man. For never have I seen you merry fellows so silent over your meal as to-day. Where in the world does the shoe pinch with you? Not that old Clayton wants to ferret out your secrets, but we all know that even rich young gentlemen like you may happen to find their purses tight, and if so, the host of the *Blue Boar* would think nothing of a few paltry pounds, to which the gentlemen would be welcome merely on their word of honour, without a written acknowledgment."

We thanked the good man for his generous offer, and assured him the state of our funds was not such as to cause us disquietude. He then looked at us in turn with as searching a glance as he could throw in his shrewd little eyes, half-buried as they were in his fat cheeks, and clearing his throat, began: "Well, gentlemen, I humbly ask your pardon. I am right glad that your purses are full, and yet, by Jove, I am half sorry, too. For, excuse me, but I am sure something has gone wrong with the gentlemen, and I could almost wish

it were money matters, as that malady could then be easily cured. What may it be after all? If I saw only one of you hang his head, I should conclude he was in love and trouble myself no more about it; but now you all of you look so glum, even the worthy Mr. Tichbourne, who has got a sweet young wife, God bless her. It occurred to me—I must again beg your pardon, but you know I mean well, and I must speak out—it occurred to me that it might be something connected with the rumours which reached my ears to-day. Yes, good sirs, believe me, one cannot be too careful in these troublesome times, when the air is thick with conspiracies and plots, in Germany, Italy, France, the Netherlands, not to speak of Scotland, which bubbles over like a witches kettle! And I must tell you the fact of your having hired this room in my house for yourselves alone, and for some months past, holding a meeting here every week with closed doors, has set idle tongues wagging. People say something is being plotted and planned here, for as much as every one knows, you, one and all, profess the old Roman faith. I should have paid no heed to this idle gossip, although I should have no objection to have you Catholics served at least in the same way we were served under 'Bloody Mary', when there were plenty of underhand goings on. But yesterday one of Walsingham's creatures, one of his craftiest spies, I know the fox, slipped into this room. I happened to come up just as he was writing down your names and the piece of Latin from the picture over the chimney piece

there. I need hardly say I sent him about his business pretty quickly, and dismissed the girl that same day, to whom he was paying court, for the sake of worming things out on the sly; for I loathe from the bottom of my soul these sneaks and tale-bearers. Now, good sirs, I do not for a moment credit you with seriously cherishing any design against crown or country, for no man in his senses would look for conspirators among jolly fellows like you, of whom, alas! merry England cannot now boast as many as in days of yore. With your permission however, gentlemen, let me remind you that the laws now-a-days are very sharp and severe, and the Lord Chief Justice would think nothing of twisting an ugly rope out of harmless hempen strands. Of course I should get into trouble too, but I will not speak of that. To make an end: I thought it my duty to warn you, that Walsingham certainly has his eye on you, and for your own sakes I should much rather you should observe less secrecy about your meetings here. Again craving your indulgence, gentlemen, in all submission, I beg you to think over my well meant warning."

So saying, he tossed off his glass, made the nearest approach to a bow that his obesity permitted, and left the apartment. When the door had closed behind him, we sat for a moment in silence, looking inquiringly at one another. Then Babington struck the table with his fist, and said, with a forced laugh: "Well, good friends, what of this? We might have known that sooner or later Walsingham would get wind of our enterprise, but

we have no reason to think that he is aware of its object."

"Probably not," observed Henry Donne, dryly, but the hounds are on the scent."

"And before they run us to earth, we shall have reached our goal: the illustrious Queen, the fairest and noblest of her race, born to inherit the crown of England, will be free, will have fled with us to the continent, and our names will be inscribed on our country's annals in letters of gold."

"Or we shall be branded as traitors, and our heads impaled on stakes on London Bridge," Donne quietly replied to Babington's enthusiastic outburst.

"What?" continued the latter, "is the first semblance of difficulty to overthrow the plan we have pledged ourselves to, as a breath overturns a child's house of cards? Did we not take into account the chance of failure, when we resolved to liberate the captive queen? He who would win fame's highest prize, must be prepared to hold his life cheap."

"Far be it from me to risk my life, and what is dearer to me, a time-honoured name and the happiness of my young wife, for the sake of earthly glory," Tichbourne replied with great gravity. "I counted it my duty to pledge myself for the liberation of the Queen of Scots, hoping that this might be the means of upholding the Catholic Faith in England. That was my only motive in joining this chivalrous enterprise, and I am fully resolved to keep my word if, as we have stipulated, the plan appears feasible. For in so important a

matter we must not trust to chance. That would not be courage, but simple madness, and the failure of the undertaking would not only be sure perdition for ourselves, but the prisoner herself would be involved in our fate."

We all declared that we agreed with him, and only on this condition were we prepared to venture our lives and our property in the attempt to which we had pledged ourselves.

Babington then explained how amongst his friends and tenants at Chartley, he would have no difficulty in raising a body of 200 men to liberate the prisoner by force of arms, if need be.

"And if the plan succeeds," asked Salisbury, "how are we to get the queen over to France?"

"There are two ways open to us," Babington replied. "One is through Lincolnshire by the Wash, where in the little port of Fossdyke I have made the acquaintance of an old fisherman, who would let me have his smack for £100. Of course I did not tell him what I wanted it for, he thinks it is a love affair. Or perhaps it would be safer to go westward to the Mersey, or through Lancashire to Formby or Southport; for Catholics are a majority in Lancashire, and if we were pursued, we could reckon upon help there. Nothing will be easier than to find the owner of some vessel who is willing to let us have his bark and his services for a good price, to sail southwards round the English coast, or northwards round the Scottish coast, and land us on the shores of Normandy. The distance to the sea is much the same whether we go to Lincolnshire or Lancashire, about sixty

miles, and could be covered in 10 or 12 hours, provided fresh horses are ready at three halting places at least.''

After a long consultation as to which route should be adopted, we finally decided upon going through Lancashire. It was longer, but the one which we should be less likely to be thought to have taken. Only two of us were to escort the queen, while the others were to fly in the opposite direction, in the hope of putting our pursuers on a false scent. It remained to determine who was to accompany the queen besides Babington, to whom, as our leader, the place of honour was naturally given. For this we cast lots; the lot fell upon Salisbury, an ardent, resolute young fellow. He promised at once to execute the instructions: namely, to acquaint himself thoroughly with the road from Chartley to Formby, and ascertain at what places a relay of horses could be obtained. Barnewell was to go with him, for he had friends residing on the Lancashire coast, and knew a good Catholic skipper, who had already smuggled several priests out of the country, and might be induced to lend his services in this instance.

So far all had, so we imagined, been wisely considered. It was, of course, impossible to fix the time when the venture was to be made, as it was necessary to await a favourable opportunity. Still we were all of opinion that it must not be indefinitely postponed, because on the one hand the queen was now in such evil care, and on the other, Walsingham would be certain to

put a spoke into our wheel, if it were true that he had got wind of our project. Whether this really were so Babington undertook to discover on the morrow, when he was going to see him about Topcliffe's behaviour at Woxindon, as well as to speak on behalf of the two prisoners. We warned him to be on his guard, for Walsingham was known to be the most crafty and unscrupulous politician to be found not only in England, but in Europe. He said there was no fear that he would let himself be hoodwinked, and when I repeated my caution, he told me I had better go with him. This, at the wish of the others, I consented to do.

Now Tichbourne suggested another and a no less important question: Were we to liberate the queen without having previously acquainted her with our design, almost, in fact, by force? Would it not be better to communicate our plan to her, and ask whether she gave her consent, and would avail herself of our assistance in the hazardous attempt? At first we could not agree on this point, there was so much to be said on both sides. At last, after a lengthy debate, we concluded that it was perfectly permissible to carry her off, apparently by force, out of the hands of her gaoler, since we might take her permission for granted, provided every arrangement was duly made, and success appeared at least morally certain. Indeed, it seemed as if in this case the wisest plan by far would be, not to breathe a word of it to the prisoner, because then there would be less chance of discovery, and if the attempt miscarry, she would be able

to prove that she had not been privy to it. Yet, as in spite of the most careful preparations the enterprise must be attended with great risk, it was thought advisable on the whole, that Babington should let the queen know, in a general way, that a number of Catholic noblemen had pledged themselves to set her at liberty, and only waited for a sign of consent from her, to venture their lives in her cause. But before giving a hint of this kind to the captive, we advised him to exchange one or two letters on indifferent subjects with her secretary, Nau, in order to test the means of getting letters in safety into the castle. Then he might ask Nau to tell him of a cipher, to be employed for communications of greater importance, but on no account should he give him more information than was absolutely necessary, or mention any persons by name.

We thought now every point in our scheme had been fully deliberated upon, and every precaution taken, so that even the most prudent amongst us, my friend Tichbourne, had nothing to urge against it. Meanwhile the flagon had gone round pretty freely, and its contents were at a low ebb. Babington proposed that we should have a glass or two of the stronger vintage of the South, to keep up our courage, and fortify us for our ride home through the chilly night air. So he called to the host to bring us *interioris notae Falernum*, that is to say his choicest wine; and old Clayton was not slow in making his appearance anew, bringing goblets of the fine Venetian glass with rings then in fashion, which sounded almost like bells as they jingled,

whilst the dusty cobweb covered bottles were being uncorked. Babington took the opportunity of thanking Clayton for the information he had given us, telling him that we had determined to explain all about our meetings to Walsingham the very next day, and tell him the meaning of the Latin lines beneath the portraits, which the old man regarded as of specially sinister import.

Our good host seemed well pleased at hearing this: "I crave your pardon once more, gentlemen," he said, "for the liberty I am taking, but I must say you are doing the right thing. Always straightforward and open, that is the good old English way, and none of the crooked ways and doubledealing of later times. Do you go and say thus to the honourable Secretary of State: We are half-a-dozen English noblemen who have joined together to bring back some of the old jollity in these sullen times. We ride, and row, and play sports and drink together; you tell him that; and tell him too that if that is a conspiracy, then you are conspirators, and old Clayton of the *Blue Boar* at St. Giles-in-the-fields, who always sets the best liquor before his guests, not the doctored stuff for which London folk pay good gold—old Clayton is our leader and the arch-conspirator. And say if the Lord Secretary of State, and the worshipful lords of the Privy Council will honour him with a visit, they shall learn all the details of this formidable conspiracy over a bottle of this old wine, and see all that is to be seen *visum repertum*, as one may say, with their own eyes. Ha, ha, ha! all in good part, gentlemen."

Thereupon Clayton quitted the apartment, whilst we under the exhilerating influence of his excellent wine, proceeded to discuss another and a more momentous matter, of which the reader shall hear in the next chapter.

CHAPTER VIII.

Babington brings a dangerous subject on the tapis; a final conclusion is arrived at, and I walk home with Tichbourne.

The old Roman poets, as is well known, used to sing the power of wine to give courage and resolution to the timid and wavering, so that they feared neither the wrath of kings nor the deadly weapons of their warriors. Perhaps it was the remembrance of Horace's lines, *Tu spem reducis mentibus anxiis etc.*, which we read together at Oxford, that led Babington, seeing that we received his proposals with cautious reserve, to call for the strong wine of the sunny south before making further disclosures to us. Accordingly not until the bottle had been passed around once or twice, and our laughter and merry talk showed that the generous liquor had warmed our blood, did he enter upon a topic of greater magnitude and greater peril. He did not communicate all he had to say at once, but told it us gradually.

First of all, he told us that he had received tidings from Paris, from the Spanish ambassador Mendoza, concerning the scheme which was to go hand in hand with ours, namely that Philip II. was at last about to make his long threatened descent upon England. Perhaps the sending of English troops to the Netherlands, or the attack of Sir Francis Drake upon the town of Vigo in Galicia, and the presence of the English fleet among his West Indian possessions had roused

the monarch to take active measures. At any rate it was a matter of fact that the Prince of Parma had been asked whether he would undertake the invasion of England, and Alexander Farnese had declared his readiness to do so, provided the Spanish fleet protected the army during its landing, and the king placed twenty thousand men under his orders. The Pope would support the enterprise with his authority and with money, since the object of it was to execute the Bull of Pius V. to dethrone Elizabeth, that is, and reinstate the Catholic religion in England. That the throne would be ascended by the rightful heir, Mary Stuart, would follow as a matter of course. There was even a report that she would marry the Prince of Parma.

It will readily be imagined, that these tidings came upon us like a thunderbolt. We all asked at once when and from whom the news had come, and why he had not told us sooner? He replied that he had received them the day before yesterday, just as we were starting to ride to Tyburn, and as we made it our habit never to speak of such things on the highway, he had waited until we were all together this evening to communicate them to us. "And what will our duty be," he concluded, "if this really comes to pass, and the Prince of Parma lands an army on our shores?"

"Our duty will be to defend our country," some of us replied. "The attack will not be directed against our country, but against Elizabeth, the illigitimacy of whose birth disqualifies her for wearing the crown, and against her bloodthirsty adherents, who for the space of twenty-eight years

already have persecuted us Catholics in the cruelest manner. Think what we have seen this very day, when a delicate young girl and an innocent child were dragged away to prison almost before their father's breath was out of his body, and one more noble Catholic house succumbed beneath the blows of the persecutor. In ten, no five years, all our Catholic families will have shared the fate of our good friends at Woxindon; and future ages will ask, could not a handful of men be found among all the Catholic nobles of England who would dare a bold deed for their rights and their faith?

"Thousands of such men have been found, but what good has come of it?" Tichbourne answered. Remember the sad end of the Pilgrimage of Grace, under Henry VIII, and of Northumberland's bold attempt in the winter of 1569, instigated by that well meant, but most unfortunate Bull of Pius V. Remember the executions of the following Christmas, when hundreds were delivered over to the headsman's axe. I am sorely afraid we shall have a repition of these horrors, if there is any truth in this report of Parma's expedition against our land."

"And I hope," retorted Babington, "that he will come, and with the edge of the sword put an end to all these preachers and their wretched following, who have brought this misery upon England. And if he does come, surely it will be the duty of every Catholic noble, to be on his side."

"I do not see that, by any means," exclaimed several of our number. "Well, quite apart from other weighty reasons," continued Babington, the Bull of Pope Pius would then come into force.

And in that case, I am not so sure that it would not be permissible for us to employ against Elizabeth the same forcible measures that she and her Council make use of against Mary Stuart. Mind you, I am not hinting at regicide, I do not forget she is a Queen."

At this we all spoke out, protesting loudly that anything of that sort was quite alien to our designs, and Tichbourne went so far as to say if another word of the kind was said in his hearing, he should altogether withdraw from our association. "I am perfectly aware," he said, "that Knox and Luther and others who hold their tenets, do not hesitate to justify the assassination of a ruler who stands in the way of the Gospel, and even designate such a crime as a meritorious work. But I also know that no good end could justify the use of means so reprehensible, so criminal, as the deliberate and wanton murder of any man, be he prince or subject."

"I quite agree with you," Babington answered that one must not do ill that good may come of it. But I ask, is it doing wrong, to eliminate what is evil? For instance, if our friend Windsor here exercises his skill as a surgeon by amputating a gangrene limb, to save a man's life, is that doing good or evil? And what is this daughter of Anne Boleyn with all her ministers but a cancer eating out the life of England?"

"That is an argument that can be easily answered," Tichbourne replied. The very same question was put to Father Crichton, and his rejoinder is well known, in fact Elizabeth herself

had it printed and disseminated.[1]) God does not as much regard whether what we do is good, as whether the reasons whereby we bring it about are good and lawful."

"And to keep to the instance you give," I added, "it is by no means anybody and everybody who is allowed to amputate a gangrene limb, but only a practical surgeon, who has received his diploma from the faculty, and can do it with skill and address. An ignoramus would kill the patient instead of curing him, and would probably be charged with manslaughter for his pains."

We were all of one mind on this point and we told Babington if he said another word in favour of such dangerous propositions, we would give up the whole concern. He hastened to throw oil on the troubled waters, by assuring us he had not meant what he said, but only wanted to find out what we thought on the matter.

Thus without a dissentient voice it was specified that every thought of violence against Elizabeth must be excluded from our scheme. But in regard to Parma's invasion we were not equally unanimous. After much arguing pro and con, it was finally determined: 1) That it was not our duty to give information to the Government or in any other way take steps to hinder the project. 2) That it was necessary, when planning the liberation of

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[1]) See the letter of this Jesuit Father in the Life of Father Weston l. c. p. 81. "Deus magis amare adverbia quam nomina. Quia in actionibus magis ei placent bene et legitime, quam bonum, ita ut nullum bonum liceat facere, nisi bene et legitime fieri possit."

the Queen, which was the one only aim of our association, to allow ourselves to be influenced by Parma's movements, in order that we might work in unison with him. Consequently Babington must keep in communication with his friends in Paris, whilst the utmost caution must be observed, for were it discovered that we had abstained from giving information, we should assuredly suffer the penalty of traitors.

At last Babington broke up our meeting, by a final toast to the success of our enterprise. We all emptied our glasses, shook hands heartily with one another, and separated, after Babington had made arrangements with me to accompany him to the Secretary of State on the morrow.

Tichbourne and I left our horses at the *Blue Boar*, and sauntered together through the lonely meadows towards Westminster Abbey, which stands about a mile from the town on the banks of the Thames. Night had closed in, but the air was so mild one might have thought it was already summer; and the soft south wind reminded me of Horace's words:

Solvitur acris hiems grata vice veris et Favoni.

Behold the sharp winter gives way by a pleasing change to the spring and the south wind.

The moon was rising in the star bespangled vault of heaven, and again I recalled the words of the same poet, the opening lines of one of his odes:

Nox erat et coelo fulgebat luna sereno
Inter nimira sidera.

It was night: and the moon shone brightly in the calm heavens amid a host of lesser orbs.

Our conversation turned upon the stars, and upon the science of the astrologer, who proposes to read in the constellations the fate of individual men. I mentioned that this was impossible; but my companion, who was naturally inclined to melancholy and had a fancy for occult science, had studied the subject, and was able to bring forward many instances in which a man's horoscope had proved perfectly correct. Although he was far from having a pagan belief in fate, he thought it by no means improbable that God, who foresaw the future, allowed us for our warning to glean some knowledge of what lay before us from the stars.

I argued on the other hand that an intimation of the kind could be of no use to us if our fate were already fixed, and that God's fore-knowledge could not interfere with our free will. He shook his head, and said that was true in a way, and that as a good christian he was ready to say to his Maker: My lot is in Thy hand. Yet he could not rid himself of the presentiment that an untimely and violent death awaited him. His father had had his horoscope cast by a celebrated German astronomer and astrologer, and it was so unfortunate, that his father never would let him know what it was.

I tried to divert him from these gloomy forebodings, and get him to talk about his sweet wife, and his pleasant home in Hampshire, where I had been his guest for a time shortly after his marriage. Ever since our Oxford days, when we were fellow students of Magdalen, we had been like brothers, and almost as inseparable as Orestes and Pylades of old. So he talked quite confidentially to me

about his domestic affairs, and said that as soon as a tedious law-suit with a protestant neighbour was ended, as he expected it would be before long, and to his favour, he meant to leave London, and reside on his own estate. There he hoped to live and die in peace, far from all political intrigues and troubles. The fines for non-attendance at the Protestant worship would be heavy, but he must try and meet them. Then he tried to persuade me to settle in Hampshire with him, and give myself up to a life of study, for he did not think I should ever make much practical use of the knowledge of medicine I had acquired at Padua. And as for the professorship of Latin and Greek poetry at Oxford or Cambridge, the latest object of my aspirations, I might as well renounce all idea of that, at once, since it was very certain that no Catholic had the slightest chance of obtaining any such post.

Conversing on these and similar topics we reached the time-honoured Minster. The clear moonlight, shining full upon the windows, brought into relief every point of their delicate tracery, and lit up every pinacle of the splendid structure. As we passed onward to the river, I remarked: "Suppose the old monarchs who rest here in their stone coffins, and the pious abbots and monks, who in the silent cloisters await the angel's last trump, could rise from their graves, what would they say to the lamentable changes Henry VIII., and the offspring of his sin have made in this and other sanctuaries of our land!"

"The old monarchs would acknowledge that in some respects their acts had sown the seed which

now bears such fatal fruit, and the old monks would exhort us to stand firm in our faith, and by prayer and penance invoke God's mercy upon our country," was Tichbourne's reply. Then he added in a changed tone, as we walked slowly onward in the direction of Temple Bar, "Look here, Windsor, call me a monk or a friar preacher if you will, but I must say every day I like our friend Babington less and less. I am the first to acknowledge that his character is utterly different to my own. He is prompt and daring, joyous and merry, and withal a loyal Catholic, ready to sacrifice everything for his convictions; but he carries his frivolity and love of pleasure to an excess. Others of us too are just as bad as he. For the execution of a project, such as we now have in hand, a leader of quite another stamp is needed, and our consultations ought not to be held wineglass in hand! Really I almost repent having pledged myself to take part in it. Upon my word, I would draw back now, if it were not against the nature of a Tichbourne to do so! You know him better than I do, Edward; pray warn him, and watch him also, for I am sorely afraid, despite his denial, that he has other foolhardy designs in view, in which we shall gradually get entangled. You saw how he drew in his horns, when we declared so positively that we would have nothing to do with the crime he hinted at. Yet I should not be in the least surprised, if so rash as he is, he should go too far, and get involved in some reprehensible transactions. Do pray be on your guard both for his sake and for ours; for we have entered into his designs to an extent which

would render us amenable to the law, even if we took no part in carrying them into execution.''

There was no gainsaying Tichbourne's words, and accordingly I promised to do my utmost to avert the mischief he dreaded. I felt watchfulness on my part to be all the more necessary, since I had observed that of late Babington had not been choice in the persons he associated with. One old soldier in particular, who had served in the Netherlands under Parma, in whose company he was frequently to be seen, a sinister-looking individual, inspired me with suspicion and aversion.

By this time we had reached the gate close to Temple Bar, whence we could see London Bridge in the distance, and hear the rush of the river passing swiftly under its arches. We made a small detour to avoid seeing the heads of the unfortunate priests who had been executed; my companion could not endure the gruesome sight, he said he saw them in his dreams, and more than once his own head was there too. On arriving at our lodging in the Strand, to our surprise we found a boy fast asleep on the doorstep. It was Johnny, the son of an old waterman named Bill Bell, who kept our boat for us. The lad informed me that he had been waiting there some hours for me; his sister was worse, and his father had sent him to beg good Mr. Windsor to go round that same evening. I had of late been attending some of the poor about St. Catherine's docks, in the neighborhood of the Tower, and the boatmen, as well as the dock labourers and porters, mostly a rough lot of people, thought a great deal of me, more because

I gave my advise gratis, sometimes supplementing it with an alms, than because of any great skill I had manifested as a physician. The girl in question was dying of consumption, and the whole college of physicians, could not have stopped the progress of the disease; yet as the doctor's visit is always a consolation to the poor, I willingly accompanied the boy to his home on this errand of mercy. But first I bade him wait a moment, while I get some physic for his sister; going indoors I fetched a bottle of good wine, wrapped a warm cloak around me, bade Tichbourne goodnight, and sallied forth again into the darkness.

I was glad to find that the boy had moored his boat at our garden steps, which ran down to the river, for I had no fancy for the narrow, dirty lanes of the city, that swarmed at night with all manner of disreputable people. The current of the river soon carried us to a landing place close to a dilapidated house, whose walls, supported on wooden posts, bulged out over the water. There my youthful ferryman made the boat fast to an iron ring, while I, glanced upwards to the narrow window of the chamber where the sick girl lay, whence a feeble light proceeded. Little did I think how precious that wretched low roofed garret would be to me before three months had come and gone!

"Maud expects us," Johnny said, pointing up to the window, then laying hold of a rope that hung from the lower room, he tugged at it violently, calling out: "He has come, father"?

Immediately a trap-door just above our heads

was opened, and a rope ladder was let down, which Johnny attached firmly to a post, and down it clambered Bill Bell himself, an unappetising figure, who might have been the ferry man of Cocytus described by Virgil:

Terribili squalore Charon, cui plurima mento,
Canities inculta jucta.

Foul and unsightly, on whose chin the grey hair thick and unkempt. But unlike the boatman of Hades, the old man looked goodnature itself: wiping away with the back of his hand a tear which hung on his eyelashes, he expressed his pleasure and gratitude for my visit.

"By my troth," he said, "I am truly thankful to you, sir, and still more my poor child yonder, who is fast passing away. God reward you, Doctor, and if ever you need a service that old Bell can render you, he will rather let himself be torn in pieces than fail you. Shall I carry you to shore, sir, or will you climb the ladder?"

I naturally chose the latter means of reaching my destination, and was soon in the room where the remainder of the family were consuming supper of salt fish.

"We must take our meals when we can," the old man remarked, as he kindled a lamp, to light me up the somewhat shaky stairs to the chamber above. There I found the poor girl in a high fever, struggling for breath, on a straw pallet by the window.

"Oh you have come, Mr. Windsor," she exclaimed "I thought I should never see you again. I believed the angel of whom you told me had come to call me away."

"I should have come long ago," I explained, "but I had gone into the country and I have only just returned. Take a little of this good physic I have brought you. Do you like it? Mind, only one spoonful every hour."

"It is delicious," the sufferer answered, sipping the wine I had poured out for her. "But it was not so much for the sake of your medicine that I wanted you to come, but that you might repeat to me that beautiful prayer about the angel guardian, and the Blessed Mother of God, and the five wounds of the Saviour. Because one of the young preachers from St. Paul's was here, and first he scolded father for making him scramble up what he called a break-neck ladder, then he read a lot of prayers to me out of a book, that I could not understand and that did me no good. Now the prayers you said made me sorry for what I have done wrong, and quite resigned to the will of God."

Accordingly, I said a few prayers by the child's bedside, the old man kneeling meanwhile by the door, the tears trickling down his weather beaten face. I promised to come again on the following evening, and he rowed me back, pulling vigorously against the ebbing tide.

"After all," he said as he bade me good night, "there is nothing like the old religion to comfort the dying."

CHAPTER IX.

Babington and I pay a visit to the Secretary of State.

The next morning, when I went down into the little garden that lay between the house and the river's bank, I found Tichbourne in a very different mood to that of the preceding evening. The fair spring morning and the bright sunshine had had the effect of raising his spirits. We sat down to our breakfast, which consisted of mulled ale and a dish of ham and eggs; before we had finished, Babington made his appearance attired in his finest toggery. He wore a skyblue velvet doublet slashed with white, and over it a crimson velvet cloak edged with silverlace; a small lace ruff and a gold chain adorned his neck; in a word, from the feather upon his new hat to the red leather shoes upon his feet, his toilette was perfect. I must acknowledge that never was a smarter young nobleman seen in the streets of London, for his pleasant face and bright eyes were right comely to look upon.

We began to tease him, asking whether he was going to Court, to cut out Sir Walter Raleigh, who at that time was the acknowledged favourite of the Queen. Babington said he did not covet the honour of being the last recipient of her fickle favour. He had only dressed himself properly that Walsingham might see that all the Catholic gentry were not obliged to go about in rags. He told me I must put on my best clothes for the same reason.

I could not consent to dress as gaily as Babington. I put on a black velvet doublet and a dark blue cloak, as more becoming to a member of the medical profession; I also let myself be persuaded to wear a pleated ruff of Tichbourne's round my neck, and his gold-handled rapier at my side. Thus accoutred, we set forth, Tichbourne wishing us God speed on our errand.

We soon reached Walsingham's residence, an unpretending dwelling in comparison to Burghley House, the Lord Treasurer's mansion, near to which it was situated, but sufficiently imposing in contrast to the generality of London houses. Thanks to our fine clothes and Babington's assumption of authority, the sentries, who stood leaning on their halberds, let us pass without a word. The porter asked our names and called a young man, one Robert Pooley by name, a man of good birth and pleasing address, who was giving his services to Walsingham as unsalaried secretary, whilst waiting for a post under government. I knew the young fellow by sight quite well, having often met him at various places of amusement. Babington seemed to be intimately acquainted with him; they greeted one another in the friendliest manner. I was introduced, and Pooley expressed himself as greatly delighted. He asked in what way he could be of service to us; when he heard that we desired an interview with the Secretary of State, he said: "There are about a dozen petitioners already waiting in the ante-chamber, and some of them are influential persons. Besides, there is a meeting of the Privy Council at Lord Burghley's

at 11 o'clock. But we must manage it somehow. I will take you into the private ante-room and announce your names to the Lord Secretary of State; one must let one's friends see that one is willing to be of use to them, and that one has got a little influence at headquarters."

Thereupon he conducted us through an office, in which a dozen clerks were busy writing, into a small cabinet, drew two arm-chairs up to a table on which lay writing materials, and requested us to write on a sheet of paper our petition for an audience, together, with both our names. This he carried in to Walsingham before the ink was dry, and speedily returned with the tidings that the minister would be most happy to receive us in a few minutes' time.

We were, in fact, scarcely kept waiting at all, before we were ushered into Walsingham's presence. I was quite taken by surprise at the friendly manner in which he received us. He wore a simple black robe, without any other ornament than a gold chain with a likeness of the Queen. As he stood by the door bowing politely, he slightly raised the black velvet cap from his head, which was quite grey and nearly bald at the top, taking our measure meanwhile with a rapid searching glance. Then he came forward smiling, and shook our hands heartily in both of his.

"It gives me great pleasure to make your acquaintance, noble sirs," he said. Then addressing me, he continued: "So you are the famous Babington, whose skill in all knightly sports is the talk of London, so that his renown has even reached

the Queen's ears. Only the other day she asked me, how it was that the young gentleman had never made his appearance at Court?"

I of course excused myself, and presented my companion, as the Babington of whom he had heard. "How foolish of me," he exclaimed, "I might have known it, from the elegance and costliness of his attire! I beg pardon a thousand times! I find myself getting more stupid every day, and I really must beg her Majesty to transfer the burden and responsibility of my office to younger and more able shoulders. Here we have a typical young courtier before us! You have travelled sir, if I mistake not, you have been in Paris? Ah, I thought as much. There is nothing like the Court of Catharine of Medicis to give a man style and polish. Our nobles here are good enough in their way, capital officers, bold sea-captains, but at Court as uncouth and awkward as can be. — And this then is Mr. Windsor, who studied at Padua with such brilliant success, and whose poetic talent has already won for him a wreath of laurels. Do not blush, sir, I only repeat what I have heard. God knows, I never have time to take a book of poetry in my hand much less to realize the aspirations of my youth, when, as Horace says:

Quodsi me lyricis vatibus inseres,
Sublimi feriam sidera vertice!

(But if you count me among the lyric poets,
With my lofty head I shall smite the stars.)

Ha, ha, one has to knock one's pate against something very different to the stars when one gets older. Please to step into my poor study, gentlemen."

Thus saying, Walsingham led us into his private room, and it will readily be understood that we were highly delighted at meeting with a reception so utterly unlike what we had expected. The compliments paid to my companion greatly increased his sense of importance, and I will not deny that the incense offered at my shrine made me see everything through a rose-coloured haze. Not until some months later did I perceive that his intention was to throw dust in our eyes, so as to draw us simpletons more easily into his net.

Walsingham begged us to sit down in his room, and seated himself at a table which was covered with documents and papers of all kinds. He continued for several minutes to speak of the pleasure our visit gave him. It came out that Babington's father and he had been fellow students at King's College, Cambridge; they had known each other very well, he said, but Babington had been by far the better scholar of the two. It was a pity, he continued, that he had never been able to reconcile himself to the new political situation. "And that seems to be the case with you two young gentlemen, is it not so? You still cannot make up your minds to attend divine worship as established by her Majesty? What a pity! I am really very sorry for it. You are shutting yourselves off from every position of influence. It appears to me most impolitic and unnecessary."

"It does involve the greatest sacrifices on our part," I remarked, "sacrifices which we certainly should not make, were they not imposed on us by our conscience."

"Alas, my young friend, that is your mistake. If her Majesty required us to do anything unchristian, I should not wonder at your opposition; but this is only a question of degree, of different forms of one common christianity, a matter upon which every ruler has the right to decide, as is now generally acknowledged. Look at Germany, there the maxim has long been accepted: *Cuius regio, ejus et religio.* Who rules the state, must its creed dictate. You know the old saying: When you are at Rome, do as the Romans do. Well, then, when you are in England, do as the English do. We are Englishmen, not Romans, therefore our christianity should be that of England, not of Rome. It would be delightful, if we were all of one faith. But for that to be the case you Catholics would have to give in on the one hand, and the Puritans and Independents on the other, and meet in the *via media* laid down by her Majesty. *Medium tenuere beati!* Here I am wasting your time with my chatter; not that I want any disputation, but only to let you see how matters appear from my point of view as an English statesman. And now, my good sirs, what can I do for you?"

Babington then told him, not without a little embarrassment, at first, how we six fellow-students had formed a kind of club for manly sports, and had taken a room at St. Giles for our *symposia*, and how on the evening before, old Clayton had made out a long story, giving us no rest until we promised to see the Secretary of State himself on the subject, for as much as in

these troublous times, any misapprehensions might lead to serious consequences.

Whilst Babington was speaking, Walsingham stroked his white beard, rubbed his long, aquiline nose, and smiled to himself. Then he laughed outright and said: "Old Clayton's advice was not particularly wise, if we are to believe the French proverb, *qui s'excuse, s'accuse.* And, really, I should feel inclined to take the matter up in earnest, if I did not know with whom I have to deal. Whatever should make you take up the idea that I should fancy you were conspirators? Is that what you were afraid of? Ha, ha, ha! They are rather different looking to you! Sinister countenance, sneaking manner, silent as the grave; that is what conspirators are. Not high-spirited young fellows like you, overflowing with mirth and gaiety. I sent the agent who brought me the information about his business. What has become of the paper? Here it is, in the waste-paper basket, with the Latin lines that he considered as particularly incriminating:

Hi mihi sunt comites, quos ipsa pericula jungunt.

Of course that only refers to dangers encountered in boating, riding, and so on. And in gambling too? No? Well, I am heartily glad that you are no dice-players. You must not be angry with the informer, because he misunderstood the lines—the offspring of your poetic talent, Mr. Windsor. He is new at his work, and we know that a young hound often mistakes the track of the deer for the slot of the wolf."

It must be confessed that these words were a

great relief to both of us, as Babington showed very plainly. We both thanked Walsingham for the good opinion he had of us, and assured him that her Majesty had no more loyal subjects than ourselves. I then added, the great kindness he showed us gave me courage to venture to lay another matter before him. In a few brief but forcible sentences, I told him what had occurred at Woxindon, concluding with these words: "I leave it to your judgment to decide whether such behaviour on Topcliffe's part, especially the arrest of a young lady not yet of age, and a boy ten years old, in the very room where their father lay dead, is calculated to make her Majesty's government more beloved. May I therefore request that you will give orders that both the children should be immediately set at liberty."

My story seemed to make quite an impression on Walsingham. He shook me by the hand, and thanked me for the good service I had done to the government. Then he rang and inquired whether Topcliffe was in the ante chamber, and on hearing that he was, desired him to be shown in directly.

Topcliffe on entering, looked not a little astonished to see Babington and me there. Walsingham spoke to him instantly, and pretty sharply too. "I must say you have done us great credit, by taking into custody a young lady and an innocent child! Who ever bade you do that? Show me the warrant I gave you, and let us see whether there is a syllable in it about either of your prisoners."

Topcliffe stammered out in excuse, that he had taken them into custody because it was evident

that they both knew the hiding place of the Jesuit, and he thought that a night spent in Newgate would unloose their tongues.

"And then you imagined you would go and seize the priest," Walsingham answered in a scornful tone. "Really, Mr. Topcliffe, such stupidity is inconceivable! Do you think that the man would wait at Woxindon for you? He is long ago over the hills and far away. Instead of patiently laying in wait for him on the spot, you come in triumph to London with two children, proclaiming your own folly, enraging me and bringing her Majesty's government into contempt! You ought to be ashamed of yourself. The best post for you will soon be one of the torturers in the Tower."

Topcliffe's countenance fell, while he listened to this tirade on the Secretary's part. Then he said: "I beg your worship not to be hard on me, and to remember how many mass-priests I have brought to the gallows. And I should have succeeded this time, for I had laid my snares devilish well, if I had not been tricked so basely. I believe these two gentlemen here, more particularly Mr. Windsor, who pretends to be a physician, had no small share in deceiving me, and therefore I humbly beg that they may be arrested forthwith."

"You incorrigible blockhead!" exclaimed Walsingham. "Begone and bring the two Bellamys here to me at once. I will myself release them from custody, and do my utmost to compensate them for the fright they have received."

Topcliffe immediately retired, while Walsingham, turning to us, said in his excuse that the fel-

low had his good points, and was a useful servant of her Majesty in the prosecution of the Jesuits and secular priests sent by the Pope into our country, and who were the cause of all the severity which the Queen, who was the most merciful of rulers, had of late years exercised towards Catholics. (I bethought myself of the hundreds who were put to death, and of the terrible penalties inflicted by law, long before Persons and Campion, who were the first Jesuits who came over, landed on our shores. But of course I kept these thoughts to myself.) "It would be greatly to the interest of you Catholics," continued Walsingham, "not to assist and harbour as you do these emmissaries of the Pope, whom our gracious Queen cannot but regard as her deadly enemy, since the publication of the Bull of deposition, that most foolish act on the part of the usually wise Curia. The coming of these men is naturally a cause of great irritation to her Majesty, the more so because of the extreme indulgence which she has shown for some years past, by commuting the sentence of death, passed on some hundred Jesuits and seminary-priests, into that of perpetual exile."

Much might have been said in answer to these assertions of Walsingham's, which he uttered in a grave, sententious manner. Moving his head slowly from side to side, he shook his finger at me, and said: "Yes, my good Windsor, there may be sòme truth in what that villain Topcliffe declared, that you had a hand in helping the Jesuit Edmund, of whom we are in search, to escape. Believe me, it is with the best intentions that I

warn you to abstain from meddling in such matters for the future, or else you may meet with rougher handling than you will find agreeable. For the nonce, however, we will wink at your doings, in order not to spoil the pleasure of our first interview.''

I thanked him for this proof of his good will, and rose to go, saying we had already trespassed too much on his valuable time. But he begged us to stay a few minutes longer, as he could not consider his time otherwise than well spent in the endeavour to disabuse the minds of two young men of talent and rank of their prejudices, especially those that related to her Majesty's proceedings. ''To prove my sincerity,'' he continued, ''my dear Mr. Windsor, I may perhaps be able to help you to a rise in your profession. We have recently received intimation from Chartley—mind I speak to you in the strictest confidence—that the health of the unfortunate Queen of Scots is anything but satisfactory. Her rheumatic pains are worse; she cannot sleep at night, and suffers from irritability and depression. Poor woman! This is not to be wondered at, after eighteen years of confinement, and the bad tidings she has about her royal son at Edinburgh. Of course liberty would be the only real cure for her ailments, and it is not my fault that she is deprived of this boon. In fact, I addressed a memorial to the Queen, setting forth in full the reasons why she ought to release her Sister of Scotland. There it is''—and as he spoke he drew a somewhat bulky document from under some papers on his

table—"there it is, if you care to see it for yourselves, but please remember that this is a state secret. Unfortunately, I must acknowledge that the arguments of my respected colleague, Lord Burghley, had more weight than mine, and the Privy Council is still of opinion, that it is necessary for the public welfare to keep Mary Stuart as a prisoner of state. So nothing more can be done. However, I shall see that she is treated with all possible humanity. I proposed to send a skilled physician to her, but she declines my offer, because the man was not a Catholic, and she was afraid his drugs might be too strong for her. A person in her position naturally becomes somewhat suspicious. Now it has just occurred to me that the post of Physician to the Queen of Scots would be very suitable for our young friend here, Mr. Windsor, not only on account of his lineage and learning, but because he is un. fortunately (begging his pardon) a stubborn Catholic. What do you say to this proposal, Doctor?"

It will readily be imagined how my heart leapt at this offer, so attractive and so unexpected! Babington nudged me with his elbow, to urge me to accept at once, as it was evident that my presence at Chartley would be most advantageous for our project. The movement did not escape Walsingham's notice, and a slight smile passed over his countenance. I suppressed the hasty acquiescence, which rose to my lips, made a formal speech of thanks to my benefactor, and begged him to allow me a couple of days

to consider the matter, lest my inexperienced shoulders were fit to bear the burden of so great an honour and responsibility. Walsingham commended me for my modesty, and bade me return within a week's time to let him know my decision.

As he finished speaking, the clock struck half-past ten. He rose and bade us farewell, shaking hands with us in the most cordial manner. As we were leaving the room, he added playfully: "Upon second thoughts, Mr. Babington, I think my suggestion that you should go to Court was rather ill-advised. It might occasion jealousies and intrigues, or even bloody duels, if a new star arose to outshine Sir Walter Raleigh, who won her Majesty's favour at the cost of his cloak, not half so grand a one, by the bye, as that which you are wearing. So you had better beware how you launch your gallant bark on to such stormy seas. *Au revoir*, dear sirs, and think of old Walsingham, who is not as bad as he is painted, as one of your best friends. What was I going to say? Oh, the two little Bellamys had better be sent to you, Mr. Windsor; you will be so good as to see that they reach Woxindon in safety. I believe you live in this neighbourhood?"

"Close by—next door to the *Anchor* on the Strand."

"That is all right. Pooley can take the children to you, or perhaps my nephew St. Barbe had better go. Once more good day to you!" So saying, with a polite bow, which we returned, he went back into his cabinet.

CHAPTER X.

We make merry with some new acquaintances and some old friends.

In the entrance hall we found Robert Pooley waiting for us. Babington, who was almost beside himself for joy, literally fell upon his neck, exclaiming: "Hurrah for the Lord Secretary of State! Never amongst non-Catholics have I found a man of such good sense and good feeling, never did I think that I should find one." In fact he was so boisterous in his rejoicing, that some of the clerks came out of the office, to see what the noise was about. I put my arm through his, and tried to get him away, but he would not be checked, and invited all present to join us at the *Anchor*, and drink Walsingham's health in a bottle of canary.

There was a little whispering between Pooley and the clerks, then he and two others, Thomas Philipps and Arthur Gregory by name, said they would be happy to accompany us. We were to know enough and too much of those two young men later on; I took an aversion to them from the very first, especially to Philipps, a red-haired fellow with sharp, ferrety eyes, and a countenance strongly marked by the smallpox. All three were quite young, scarcely older than ourselves, and knew how to keep up a pleasant conversation, so that before many glasses of canary had been drunk, we had become better friends than considerations of prudence would have allowed. In the exuberance of his high spirits Babington appeared inclined to

disclose his projects to his guests, who evidently tried to draw him. I was obliged to admonish him, by treading on his foot under the table, not to say what an hour later he would have wished to recall.

Finding that Babington's lips ran over with their master's praise, our three guests took their cue, and said all they could in his favour, and how it certainly was not his fault that Catholics were so hardly dealt with. They declared Lord Burghley was to blame for that; as for Walsingham, he had for some time past been striving to form a party in Parliament, to bring about a repeal of the more stringent laws against Catholics. It was all through him that the Queen had pardoned so many priests, and the execution of the two seminary priests, two days since, had been entirely Lord Burghley's doing. It was obvious that so astute a politician as Walsingham would be desirous to stand well with the Catholic aristocracy, because each year made it less probable that Elizabeth would marry, and give a protestant heir to the english throne. On the other hand, there was almost a certainty that the captive Queen of Scots would ascend the throne after all, and this was reason enough why Walsingham should incline more and more to the side of the Catholics. In fact, they thought he would not be sorely displeased, if Mary Stuart were to escape from captivity, if only to spite Lord Burghley.

Of course we drank in all this information eagerly, as it afforded us a clue to Walsingham's unexpected friendliness. Then it was that Babington was on the eve of revealing all our schemes.

I was only just in time to prevent this, by administering to him, as I have said, a vigorous kick. I then remarked that every lover of justice must rejoice to see the Queen of Scots set at liberty; but I could not believe that the Protestant party would tolerate a Catholic sovereign upon the throne. In that case it would be seen how patiently the Catholics had borne the heavy yoke, in contradistinction to the Puritans, who would soon rise in arms against a "papist" Queen.

Our guests laughed, and said, possibly some fanatic might draw the sword in his zeal for the Lord, but the majority of the people would take their beads again and go quietly to mass.

"In that respect," observed Pooley, "we are far more politic than you Romanists. Just as Lord Burghley, then Sir William Cecil, used to serve mass piously in the days of Queen Mary the Catholic, so now-a-days, he and Walsingham and thousands more would go to mass again at the Queen's command. If you were a little more time-serving, you would fare much better, and do your religion better service, than by bearing fines and imprisonment, not to speak of worse penalties, that are always hanging over your heads."

Such was the gist of our conversation, as we sat over our sack in the private parlour into which our host of the *Anchor* had shown us. We shook hands on parting, Robert Pooley being especially friendly. Babington made an appointment with him to go for a row on the Thames that afternoon.

When at length we reached home, Tichbourne was waiting impatiently to hear how we had fared.

When we told him of Walsingham's great cordiality, he was by no means as much gratified as we had been. He thought it was all assumed in order to deceive and entrap us. This made Babington very angry, and I had hard work to prevent a quarrel between the two. Tichbourne held to his opinion, and said: "Believe me, Walsingham is an old fox, and an enemy more to be dreaded than Burghley, who in some respects is a more honourable man, though it would not be easy to find his equal in guile and perfidy."

"You are a bird of ill omen," answered Babington, "shutting your eyes to the light of day. What could be more honourable than the whole of Walsingham's behaviour towards us? If he had suspected us of being conspirators, would he have talked in so candid and frank a manner? If he had had any misgivings in regard to our schemes, would he have offered Windsor the post of body-physician to the Queen of Scots, thus admitting us to free intercourse with the prisoner, and smoothing the way most delightfully for her rescue?"

"Or rather laying a hidden snare for us," continued Tichbourne. "The fisherman sets the weir-basket wide open, the trout swims in and finds himself caught."

"You always were and always will be the most terrible sceptic I ever knew," rejoined Babington impatiently. "And you Windsor, are far too slow and cautious. With such ways as yours no bold enterprise could ever be carried out. You should have accepted Walsingham's offer at once, and expressed yourself as deeply indebted to him!"

"I believe", answered Tichbourne, "that Windsor's hesitation was the wisest thing either of you did this morning. Walsingham very probably only made this extraordinary proposal as a test, and to have closed with it eagerly would only have been to confirm his suspicions."

"His suspicions!" Babington retorted. "I tell you he has no suspicions. If he had, would he have destined one of us to fill so important a post?"

"To offer any one a post and to destine him for it are different things," Tichbourne answered. "Walsingham has his own ways and means of rendering the acceptance of it impracticable. He may attach impossible conditions to it; he must submit it to the Privy Council, perchance to the Queen, for approval, and that may be withheld; he may—"

Here Babington interrupted him again, saying he would hear no more. "What if Windsor accepts the day after tomorrow?" he asked.

"Then we must hear the conditions, and make sure that we are not being entrapped into anything," Tichbourne replied; and I added, in that case I should believe that Walsingham had political reasons for desiring Mary Stuart to be set at liberty, and he was making a tool of us. At this juncture our housekeeper, old Barbara came hurriedly into the room, announcing that two young gentlemen with a young lady and a little boy were below, asking for us. "They have come," Babington exclaimed, and he and I ran down stairs.

Right enough, the little Bellamys were there, crying and laughing for joy when they saw Babington and me again. The boy threw himself into

Babington's arms, and Mistress Anne behaved very graciously towards him, whom she looked upon as an old friend. Robert Pooley had come with them, and another young man, very quiet and demure looking, whom I felt at once I would much sooner trust than Pooley, who was almost cringing in his civility. This young man was introduced to us as Mr. St. Barbe, Walsingham's nephew, now known to us as our worthy Brother Anselm, whom I saw for the first time on that 22nd of April in the year of grace 1586, under very pleasant circumstances, since by his uncle's orders he was bringing the children to us, safe and sound out of prison.

I invited the whole party to come up stairs to my room, and as soon as the first greetings and congratulations were over, I hastened to dispatch Barbara to the *Anchor* Inn, to procure the best luncheon that was to be had, and to fetch from a french pastry cook's in Fleetstreet, some toothsome cakes for desert, such as ladies and children love. I was accustomed to find Barbara rather contrary, when there was a question of entertaining any of my comrades, but on this occasion, against her wont, she ran off quite willingly, on hearing that the two children had been shut up all night in Newgate for conscience sake, for she was a staunch Catholic, and a kind old soul at heart.

Whilst Barbara was laying the table and preparing the repast, the Bellamys related their adventures. Topcliffe had himself conducted them to prison, and stopping under the dark, frowning gateway with its iron gates, had asked the boy again if he would tell him the Jesuit's hiding-

place. The child acknowledged that the massive, formidable walls struck terror into his soul, but he stoutly refused to answer, thereby earning a hard blow from his enraged questioner. The poor little fellow went on to say that he had raised his eyes to the niche above the gateway where stood an image of the Blessed Virgin, and remembering that his grandmother had told him how Campion, on his way to execution, had saluted that very image, he bowed his own curly head respectfully, in imitation of the martyr. After that he did not feel much afraid of Topcliffe and the savage looking porter with the great keys. But when Topcliffe pointed out a ruffian-like individual, who glared at the child as if he would like to devour him, and told him it was the headsman, who would cut his head off if he did not tell where the Jesuit was, his blood did, he said, run cold. "Then," he continued, "they put Anne and me into a narrow, pitch dark cell, without giving us a morsel of supper, where there was never a bed to sleep on, only a heap of straw in one corner, on which, when we had said our prayers, we huddled ourselves together and tried to sleep. And just fancy how horrible! there came a rustling in the straw, and something ran right over me, a mouse or a rat, I did not know which; and we both cried for fear lest we should be eaten up alive before the morning. We thought of Daniel in the lion's den, and we felt sure that Almighty God, who shut the mouths of the great lions, would surely shut the mouths of the mice and rats. Then I remembered how the prophet Habacuc carried the reapers' dinner to

Daniel, and I wished Uncle Remy would bring me my bread and milk. At last I fell asleep, and when I woke it was broad daylight, at least as light as it could be with only one little barred window, and the jailer was there with a basin of gruel for our breakfast. The whole morning we sat on a bundle of straw, till all at once the key was turned in the lock, and in came Topcliffe, in a worse temper than I had ever seen him before. He was cursing and swearing, and I thought we were going to have our heads cut off. He drove Anne and me down the steps and out of the gate, but I did not forget to make my obeisance to our Lady as we passed. However he did not take us to the scaffold, but to a fine house, where there was a grand gentleman with a gold chain. He was very kind; he kissed Anne's hand and patted me on the head, but I did not like him half as well as I like you, Mr. Babington, or you, Mr. Windsor; I do not know why, but he had such funny eyes—"

"Frith," interrupted Anne hastily, "for shame, we owe our release to him. Go to that young gentleman yonder, who is the Lord Secretary's nephew, and beg his pardon."

The boy at once went up to St. Barbe, and begged him not to tell his uncle what he had said; adding that he would pray God to reward him for his kindness.

St. Barbe smiled good humouredly, and putting his hand into his pocket gave the child a brand new shilling for his amusing story, and bade him say a prayer for him too. But as he was at that time a rigid Puritan, he reproved the boy for making a

reverence to the image of the Mother of God, saying that it was popish idolatry, since God had forbidden us to make graven images. Frith, who was a precious little fellow, immediately said, if images were forbidden, why was the Queen's effigy on his bright shilling? "We are forbidden to worship images," St. Barbe explained. "We do not worship the image of the Mother of God," rejoined the boy, "we only show it homage and reverence. What would you say if I treated the Queen's portrait here with disrespect? And she is only the Queen of England, whereas Blessed Mary is Queen of Heaven and earth, and carries in her arms the Child Jesus, who is true God and our Redeemer."

I was so pleased with this answer on Frith's part, that I pulled out my purse and gave him a crown piece. Babington did the same, to the great delight of the boy, who had never before had so much money in his possession. To the credit of St. Barbe, I must say that he seemed more disconcerted than displeased by the child's repartee, and took it with a good grace. Pooley kept saying that little Bellamy would surely one day be Archbishop of Canterbury.

Just then Barbara came in to say luncheon was on the table. Pooley and St. Barbe rose to take leave, but we pressed them to join us at our little feast, so that we might in some slight measure show our sense of the obligation we were under to the Secretary of State in the persons of his nephew and his assistant. Pooley accepted at once; St. Barbe yielded after a little persuasion, and we all sat down to table. The viands were

excellent, and our appetites were excellent too, since two of the party had been fasting in Newgate, and the others were young and hearty. The dessert was what Miss Anne and little Frith appreciated most: gingerbread and confectionery, dried raisins, dates from the Levant and golden oranges, and last of all, a tiny glass of sweet Tokay, a choice liqueur which Tichbourne produced from the cupboard in honour of the day. We should all have been right merry, had not the remembrance of their poor father's recent death prevented the two children from enjoying themselves as they otherwise would have done. But in the morning of life, tears and smiles follow close upon one another, and one could not take it amiss, if the sorrows of yesterday were forgotten awhile in the joys of today.

However, Miss Anne presently begged us to escort her and her brother to Woxindon. So we said grace, and Tichbourne went to see about the horses. In the meantime, we went out into the garden; Babington offered his arm to Miss Anne, and gathered for her a little posy of the fragrant violets which grew under the hedge. Frith and I went down to the landing place, where our boat lay. Of course nothing would content the boy, but to go onto the river; therefore, as we saw our boatman Bill Bell at a little distance, we called to him to take us for a row. The rest of the company were willing to accompany us, so we all got into the boat, for we knew that nearly an hour would elapse before the horses were ready.

CHAPTER XI.

The incidents that occured during our row upon the Thames, and a conversation that the Queen held with little Frith.

The beautiful spring weather had tempted many people out on the river that afternoon, and it was covered with barges of every size and description, with bright pennons and streamers and full of gaily dressed folk. From the opposite bank, where the *Paris Garden*, a favourite place of entertainment, was situated, came sounds of music; flags flying from the tents invited idlers to enjoy the amusements and pastime provided for them. Many of the boats were plying thither; others like our own, were rowed slowly up and down, that their occupants might bask in the sunshine, and obtain a good view of the town, with its multitudinous houses, palaces and churches. Bill Bell rowed us up as far as Westminster, where the magnificent Abbey was seen to perfection in the soft clear sunlight, but he took care not to approach too near to London Bridge, for fear lest the young lady and the boy should discern the horrible trophies impaled thereon. Babington sat in the stern and steered the boat; the two children and myself occupied the middle, with St. Barbe and Pooley facing us in the bow. We had enough to do to tell the boy, who questioned us incessantly, the names of all the churches and prominent buildings, and were often surprised at the sagacious remarks he made. "What is that gloomy edifice with a quantity of closely barred windows, close to the riverside?" he inquired.

"That is the Clink," I answered. "There are about five and twenty Catholic priests confined there now, and many of our martyrs have languished within those walls."

"And now uncle Robert is shut up there," rejoined the boy. "Please Babington, steer us close by, perhaps we may see him at the window of his cell."

"Very likely we shall," replied Babington, "provided it looks out on the river, for all the prisoners seem to have come to the window for the sunshine. Look, you can see row after row of heads gazing out at the water."

In fact, as we drew nearer to the walls we could see the face of some captive behind the grating of every loophole, and before long the boy's sharp eyes descried his uncle at one of the windows just under the roof. He shouted to him, and Anne waved her handkerchief. The prisoner recognized the children, and thrusting his hand through the bars waved a greeting in return. But the current was too strong to allow our remaining stationary, so we had to drift down and then pull back in a curve. After this had been done two or three times, it attracted the notice of the watchmen, who called to us, asking what we were looking for, and bidding us begone from the place. The hubbub they made led a boatful of young men and low people who were passing to push their boat nearer, and assail us with cries of "Papists! Papists!" Then they began to ask, if we had come to get absolution for our wicked plots from one of the priests of Baal who had lodging there at the Queen's

expense, or if we were scheming to get the blackbirds out of their cage?

Babington was never inclined to let himself be insulted by the populace, and he might have got us all into trouble, had not both the young lady and St. Barbe both begged our oarsman to row away as fast as he could. St. Barbe moreover stood up in the boat, and asked the watchmen if they did not know who he was? Then a voice from one of the surrounding boats called out: "It is Lord Walsingham's nephew! Citizens, uncover your heads!" Thereupon both the watchmen on the banks and the people in the boats were fain with humble apologies to let us pass on our way; but just at that moment we became aware of the proximity of a barge of considerable size, whose rapid approach neither we nor the Londoners had observed in consequence of the recent commotion.

The vessel was a most magnificent one; on the prow was the gilt figure of a unicorn, supporting a shield with the arms of England; rich tapestries hung on the sides to the water's edge; in the middle of the deck was a pavilion of red and white silk, raised on painted poles and adorned with costly fringes and tassels. The centre of the pavilion was surmounted by a large gilt crown; plumes of ostrich feathers nodded from each corner while from the stern of the boat floated a silk banner bearing St. Andrew's cross. In the prow two servants of the royal household wearing their livery of black and red and bearing silver staves were stationed; ever and anon they shouted with stentorian voices: Make way for her Majesty the Queen!

It was, in fact, the royal barge, for Elizabeth, profiting by the beauty of the day, was removing the Court from Richmond to her palace at Greenwich. Manned by able oarsmen, it had outstripped the barges and boats of the Queen's suite, which were left almost out of sight in the distance. The Queen was to be seen seated on some velvet cushions beneath the baldachino, herself decked in costly and gorgeous apparel, for, as is well known, she resembled her mother, Anne Boleyn, in the delight she took in the extent and splendour of her wardrobe. I never had so good a view of her as from our boat on the Thames that afternoon, and I was much struck by her proud and majestic appearance. She wore upon her head a small gold crown; an enormous ruff of the finest Brabant lace encircled her throat; her bodice was a blaze of jewels; her huge puffed sleeves of blue velvet were covered with a network of lilac cords, and her white velvet skirt was stiff with gold embroidery and pearls. But it was not the magnificence of her dress that proclaimed her to be the Queen, so much as her haughty bearing, the keen, searching glance of her eye. She had once been handsome; but strong passions, more than actual years, had worked havoc with her beauty, havoc which the rouge-pot could no longer avail to conceal. Several of her ladies in waiting sat at her feet. These were generally selected with care, lest their good looks should throw the Queen into the shade. A few courtiers stood or sat around, amongst them I remarked Sir Christopher Hatton, and the new favourite Sir Walter Raleigh, who took the place of the Earl of Leicester, then absent in Flanders.

I had little opportunity to make these observations, for in less time than it now takes to put them into words, the royal barge was close upon us. Elizabeth had heard the shouts of the watchmen from a distance, and seen how the boats had gathered around us; and when the cry of "Papists" reached her ear, she at once gave orders to turn the barge's head in that direction. It may be imagined that we were both astonished and alarmed to find ourselves in the presence of her Majesty, who from under the baldachino was looking at us with angry eyes.

"What is all this about? What has happened?" She inquired in no kindly tone of voice. The smaller boats that were around us immediately drew off, leaving us almost alongside of the royal barge.

"Why does no one answer?" continued the Queen with rising irritation. "What is this about Papists that I heard?"

Babington and I stood up in the boat to explain and excuse ourselves. Before we could utter a word, Elizabeth's eye fell upon St. Barbe, and she exclaimed with some asperity: "Why there is Walsingham's nephew! In somewhat strange company, methinks. Or are the gentlemen perhaps not Papists after all, who were holding a pious conversation with the pretty birds in yonder cage? Fie, fie, what would your worthy uncle say to this? And our beloved Judith Cecil here, the great Burghley's fair daughter, who, if our eyes have not deceived us, gave St. Barbe the foremost place among her many adorers? Look at your faithless

knight, good Judith, and look too at the fascinating Circe, who, it appears, has bewitched him.''

''Your Majesty seems to overrate my influence very much. — I should rather ask the members of your Court how it is that this young gentleman prefers his present companions to them,'' replied the girl addressed, who was a more decided beauty than Elizabeth was wont to tolerate about her person, and whom on this account precisely she delighted in annoying.

The Queen cast a sinister glance at the girl, who had spoken with a dignified indifference of manner. ''Very flattering for the gentlemen and ladies of our Court, and for ourselves,'' she rejoined. ''Fie, Miss Cecil! Were it not for the services your father, our incomparable Lord High Treasurer, renders us, we should feel tempted to assign you a chamber in yonder Clink, where you would have leisure to study manners for a week or two! But we are forgetting what we came here for, you, little man there, you shall tell us what has happened. You, at any rate, will invent no lies. So tell us at once what is your name, who are the people with you, and what was this commotion about?''

Frith stood, cap in hand; his fair, curly hair tossed about his rosy, childish face, his honest blue eyes looking gravely but fearlessly at the Queen. He told us afterwards, that he should have liked to reproach her for having imprisoned and put to death so many priests, but something seemed to bid him refrain from doing so, and he therefore answered her questions quite simply.

"My name is Frith Bellamy, and I live at Castle Woxindon, not very far from here, the other side of St. John's Wood. When you get to the beech tree at the cross-roads you must keep to the right, for the road to the left takes to the village of Harrow."

"You tell me that, in case I should pay you a visit," said the Queen, laughingly. The maids of honour tittered audibly, all but Mistress Cecil, whose features did not relax. The boy was quite offended at the amusement his words excited, he went on, addressing her Majesty: "Oh, several monarchs have been in our house, and my great-grandfather, whose name was Frith also, died at Bosworth for your predecessors, fighting against Richard III. If your Majesty condescends to visit us, I must beg you will come without these ladies, who laugh at what I say."

"Well said, youngster," rejoined the Queen, who seemed to be favourably impressed by the child's speech, and spoke more kindly to him. "Your wishes shall be respected. Now tell me who the others are; that young lady is probably your sister."

"Yes, your Majesty, her name is Anne. I have another sister, who is called Mary."

"And which is the favourite sister?" asked the Queen, toying with a massive gold chain that hung round her neck.

"I am very fond of both. When I want to romp, I like Anne best; when the time comes for learning my lessons and my prayers, I like Mary best."

Elizabeth next inquired, who the gentlemen were in the boat.

"This one with the gay cloak and fine doublet is Mr. Babington; I like him very much; he drew ever so many soldiers and huntsmen for me on cardboard; Anne painted them, and I helped cut them out. That gentleman is Mr. Windsor; I have not known him long, but still I like him, for he has just given me a feast of cakes and wine, and these beautiful golden fruits, we have none like them in our garden." So saying the child took an orange out of his pocket which I had slipped in, and held it out to the Queen, who was evidently amused at his prattle. "The other two gentlemen I never saw till just now, I do not know their names. The big one is grave, but the little one makes jokes; he told me I ought to be Archbishop of Canterbury."

"By my troth, Sir Christopher Hatton, you might learn from this little lad how the Master of Ceremonies should present people to his Sovereign! He does not only tell us the names and titles, but the capacities and qualities of the individuals in question."

Hatton laughed, and said that such plain speaking would be rather dangerous at Court, and was only fit for children and fools, who proverbially speak the truth. However in virtue of his office he would give her Majesty a little additional information respecting the persons thus informally presented. Thereupon he said a few words about our respective families, taking care to emphasize the fact, that we were two of the wealthy young Catholics, whose names had been mentioned lately at Court.

The Queen frowned on hearing this, and looked anything but graciously at Babington and me. Babington, always more prompt at action than myself, hastened to make a profound obeisance, and declare that apart from his religious belief, he was ready to place his life and all that he had, at the disposal of his rightful sovereign. It was apparent that the good looking young cavalier, in his rich attire, found favour in the Queen's eyes; her brow unbent, and she intimated it to be her pleasure that we should shortly wait upon her at Court. "Unless indeed," she added with a sneer, "the gentlemen regard me as under the ban of the Pope, a rotten sheep to be avoided by the rest of the flock."

I was glad to see her address herself again to little Frith, who still stood there with his orange in one hand and his cap in the other. "You are probably a Catholic too," she said. "They will have taught you that I am excommunicate—confess it now!"

"What does excommunicate mean?" asked the child.

"Accursed! given over to the devil!"

"Nobody ever said anything like that to me," Frith replied. "I pray for you every day, and I have often been told that I must be your Majesty's loyal subject when I grow up to be a man, and must fight for you in battle, as my ancestors did. Not long ago Cousin Page came to collect voluntary subscriptions for the fleet against Spain; grandmother gave £10 out of her annuity, and father and we all gave money. I put in half a crown out of my savings box."

"That was very generous of you. Perhaps you would give me your beautiful golden apple, as you call it, if I were to ask you for it."

There was a momentary hesitation on Frith's part, and the Queen, who was observing him narrowly, was opening her lips to make some sarcastic remark, when the boy, quietly coming to a decision, rejoined: "Right willingly. Here, catch it; it would be a pity if it fell into the river."

So saying he threw the orange; it fell at the Queen's feet. "I have another, would your Majesty like that too? If not, I will take it home for my grandmother and sister, they can divide it between them."

"You meant this one too for them, which you have given me, did you not?" inquired the Queen. "You are a good boy, Frith Bellamy. We must consider presently how to reward you. But now tell us what went on here, before we came on the scene."

"Nothing very much. Do you see the fourth window in the row under the eaves? There is a man looking out at us; that is my dear Uncle Robert; he is put in there because he went to mass. Anne and I wanted to ask him how he was, but the watchmen came down with their spikes and halberds, and a number of boats began to surround us, and the people called out that we were papists, as they always do, when they want to insult us. That was all; now may it please your Majesty to do us the great favour of letting my uncle go free. He did nothing wrong; and it is a wretched thing to be shut up in prison, as I found last night in Newgate."

"What, you in Newgate! Were you placed under arrest? I must hear all about that," exclaimed Elizabeth.

Then Frith told his tale, much as he told it to us, the Queen meanwhile sometimes laughing, sometimes chiding. When he had ended, she said: "With regard to your uncle's release, we cannot decide the matter at once, but must take counsel with our advisers. As for your reward, however, we can tell you now what that is to be: You shall come to Court and be my Page of honour. I myself will see to it that you are brought up as a pious Christian and a faithful adherent of the Crown. I can discern in you valuable qualities of head and heart, and I do not want them spoilt by popish rubbish, or hidden away in some country house. You shall come with us immediately: climb up onto our barge."

The boy looked frightened and clung to his sister; and I confess it sent a pang to my heart to think of the difficulties and hard struggles that lay before him, if he was to keep true to his faith. But there was no gainsaying the Queen's will. He could do nothing more than ask for a respite, and this we obtained, by representing to her Majesty that the child's father lay dead, and entreating that he might be permitted to return home, in order to attend the obsequies, and also that his outfit might be prepared. The Queen granted this at last, though somewhat ungraciously, and not until we had pledged our word that the boy should be sent to Court. Moreover she laid injunctions on St. Barbe to see that her commands were carried out.

Long before this conversation came to an end, the Queen's attendants, and the ladies and gentlemen of her suite, who were following on about a dozen gaily decorated boats, had arrived on the scene. They, like ourselves, experienced some trouble to keep from drifting further, and thus getting in front of the royal barge, which no one was allowed to do. A large concourse of spectators had assembled on the banks, eager to see the Queen and to hear what was going on. They waved their hats and cheered the Queen quite lustily; presently someone found out that we were papists, and cries of "No Popery!" mingled with the shouts. Some voices cried "Hurrah for our Virgin Queen!" others were so bold as to bid her marry, and give a Protestant heir to the throne. Elizabeth had already evinced displeasure when this suggestion had been made to her by Parliament; to hear it from the lips of the populace aroused her anger, and she gave orders for the oarsmen to proceed.

And while the royal barge moved on its stately course down the Thames, amid the peal of bells from the church steeples, and a salute from the Tower guns, we too turned, and rowed rapidly homewards, after Frith and Anne had waved a farewell greeting to their uncle.

Now that the gentle reader has become acquainted with St. Barbe, or as we now call him, Brother Anselm, we will let him take up the narrative, and relate in his own words the events of his life, and speak of his connection with his uncle, Secretary Walsingham, and with Lord Burghley's fair daughter Judith.

CHAPTER XII.

Brother Anselm appears in his early character of an ardent Puritan and a diplomatist of no mean powers.

I am now about to relate my history, such as it is, or rather the record of God's mercies towards me, unworthy as I am of His grace. I do this, not only because our Rev. Father Guardian has enjoined it upon me in virtue of holy obedience, but for my own humiliation on the one hand, and on the other for the praise and honour of the triune God; "unto the praise of the glory of His grace" (Eph. 1, 6.) to quote the words of St. Paul, who himself persecuted the people of God, until he was converted by the light from on high.

It will be well, more in explanation than in excuse of after events, to begin by saying a few words about my youth, which was by no means a happy one.

I was born in the year of grace 1559, the second year of Queen Elizabeth's reign, on St. John Baptist's day; on the very day, observe, fixed by Parliament for the abrogation of the mass, "the idolatrous" mass, as it was termed, throughout England; the adoption of the new liturgy or divine service as appointed by the Queen, being then made compulsory. I need not say whether that day was to be considered fortunate or unfortunate, *dies fastus* or *nefastus!* My unhappy parents, on whose souls may God have mercy, had been schismatics under Henry VIII, reformed under Edward VI,

Catholics under Mary; consequently under Elizabeth they conformed to the new regulations. In this respect they acted like the majority of the English nobles, and it is to be hoped that they did not fully know what they were doing. I was baptized according to the new ritual, for the pastor of my native place in Kent had chosen to conform, in order to escape the heavy fines or imprisonment which were the penalty of disobedience, and the name of Francis was given me. I rejoice to think that our holy Father of Assisi took me under his protection, although I was not named after him, but after my uncle, Sir Francis Walsingham, who had been a fellow student with my father at King's College, Cambridge, and married his sister, my aunt. My father had also married Walsingham's only sister, so the connection was twofold.

When I was about four years old, my parents were both carried off, within a few days of one another, by an epidemic that visited our home in Kent. It is a great consolation to me to know that a faithful servant fetched one of the old priests to them on their death bed, for I have every reason to hope that they made their peace with God before quitting this life. My education was confided by my Uncle Walsingham, who was also my guardian, to a stern Calvinist, who early infused into my youthful mind a profound hatred of the Pope and of the Catholic Church. I heard the Holy Father designated as Antichrist, the Cardinals and Bishops as a brood of devils; while Priests were called ministers of Baal, and the Church of Rome herself was denominated the harlot of Babylon. I too, in my

ignorance, took these names upon my lips, for which may God forgive me! My teacher did not scruple to apply these and other yet more opprobrious epithets to Dr. Martin Luther, to Zwingli, to the Anglican bishops, to every one, in fact, whose tenets were not precisely those of the Genevan Apostle. But his fiercest invectives were reserved for the late Queen Mary, whom he called by the foulest names. During her reign some of his relatives or friends had perished at the stake on account of their obstinate adherence to the Calvinistic heresy. Thus he continued to fill my youthful imagination with darksome images, and my heart with antipathy and detestation towards everything Catholic, until I began to think the Christian religion was a religion not of love but of hatred. Another object of his special aversion was the Queen of Scots, on account of the stand she had made against John Knox and the Scottish Reformers; he rejoiced when she fell into Elizabeth's hands, and was by her placed in captivity. That was in the summer of 1568; I yet remember the day when the tidings reached us in Kent, for in honour of the joyous event I had a whole holiday given me, a most unheard of privilege.

After I had left this tutor, whose name charity forbids me to mention, and in whose heart I pray the seed of grace may be sown in return for the evil he implanted in mine, I was sent to King's College, Cambridge, where my father and uncle had been. Whilst there I did not hear the same vehement abuse of the Catholic Church, though I heard little said in her favour. The ideas, however, which my

tutor had led me to form of the Anglican Establishment and the bishops appointed by Elizabeth, were greatly modified and altered. I considered it to be a Christian and true church, although for myself I still clung to what appeared to me a purer and better creed than that of the Puritans, who were so called because they had purged away all the errors of Popery. I passed through the usual course of classical study without distinguishing myself in any way, and was then placed by my uncle with a barrister in the Temple to study civil law. Somewhat later I was sent to Paris, more perhaps with a view of learning the French language, than for the sake of attending the lectures on jurisprudence at the University. Whilst I was there my uncle obtained for me the post of secretary to the English ambassador, one which he himself had formerly filled, and I began to tread the smooth and slippery paths of diplomacy.

I cannot say that my residence in Paris tended to give me a better opinion of the Catholic Church. Henry III, who was then upon the throne, was a slave to his passions; his mother, the famous Catherine de Medici, did not do her religion much credit, and the Court imitated the royal example only too faithfully. To this was added the fierce hatred against the Huguenots, which was intensified by the war and by the massacre of St. Barthol omew. I used to attend a Calvinistic conventicle, where the forcible language employed by the preachers recalled the utterances of my tutor in early days. We had orders from Elizabeth through Lord Burghley, to foment by every means in our

power the religious strife in France, as well as the insurrection in the Netherlands, since England had nothing to fear, while they lasted, from the two great Catholic powers of which she stood in dread. I was then initiated into not a few intrigues and underhand practices. Only on the day when all secrets are revealed, will it be made known to what expedients the politician will resort for the purpose of attaining the end he has in view. And yet the very persons who acted in this manner, reproached the Jesuits with taking it as their principle, that the end justifies the means!

When the Duke d'Alençon, one of the King's brothers, was in treaty for Elizabeth's hand, and travelled to London with a grand retinue, I was chosen to accompany him. The Duke was twenty-four years old, the Queen twice his age; and I confess I blushed for my Sovereign when I saw her behaving like a young maiden towards her youthful suitor. But my Uncle Walsingham explained to me that the marriage of the Queen to a French prince was expedient as the only means of counteracting the power of Spain, which was increased by an alliance with Portugal. I was present at the banquet which the Lord Treasurer gave at Burghley House on the 30th of April 1581, in honour of the distinguished guest.

That day was a memorable one for me, because I then for the first time saw Judith Cecil, Lord Burghley's daughter, who later on, in the Providence of God was to exercise a most beneficial influence over me. My uncle directed my attention to this rich heiress. My fortune, he told me, was

not equal to my birth, and he would not have much to bequeath to me, as he had not amassed wealth in the service of his sovereign. His colleague Burghley, on the contrary, had been enriched by the acquisition of large estates on the confiscation of the church property. Of course the number of aspirants for the hand of his daughter was not small, but that must not deter me from attempting to win the prize, as he saw no reason why I should not be successful. In fact my grave and sedate manner might perchance prove an attraction to the girl, whose own demeanour was quiet and reserved. Nothing moreover would give him greater satisfaction than the match.

Walsingham's wish was tantamount to a command for me. But when once I had seen the lovely maiden, I needed no urging on his part to induce me to approach her. During my presence in London I often had occasion to go to Lord Burghley's house on official business, and thus the opportunity was afforded me of seeing his daughter at a time when she was not surrounded with a crowd of admirers. Our conversation generally turned upon serious topics, often questions of a religious and philosophical nature were discussed by us. Her clear intelligence detected the inconsistency involved in Calvin's terrible doctrine of predestination; she was the first to point it out to me. In vain did I seek to find a flaw in her reasoning; the doctrine of free will, which she expounded to me, appeared far more just and right; but how astonished I was, when, at a subsequent period, I discovered that the arguments she used were in accordance

with the teachings of the Catholic Church which I held in such horror! It was after my return to Paris that I found this out, and I immediately wrote to Judith Cecil, informing her that her views on the subject of predestination were those held by the Papists, and warning her, lest she should be ensnared by them to her eternal destruction. This was not the only theological love letter I addressed to her, and her answers to them were such as would have taxed a cleverer hand than mine to refute.

In the mean time we were not idle at the embassy. Through the reports of spies it had become known to us that the Duke of Guise was planning an invasion of England, in view of liberating Mary Stuart, to whom he was related, placing her upon the throne of England which belonged to her by right, and re-establishing the Catholic religion by force of arms. In imagination I saw the fires of Smithfield re-kindled, of which I had been told in my childhood, and I knew that the victims would be taken from those whom I counted my best friends. We therefore, made every exertion to avert the catastrophe. I was despatched in all haste to London. In consequence of the information I gave, Francis Throgmorton's house was searched, and in it the whole plan of the invasion was discovered. After that the Queen received me very graciously, and Lord Burghley distinguished me with so many marks of his favour, that I was generally regarded as his future son-in-law, the more so, because his daughter made no secret of her liking for me. This, together with the conviction that I had been the means of unmasking traitors to

their country, prevented me from grieving, as I should otherwise have done, over the bloodshed that followed the discovery of the plot. Unfortunately, a considerable number of innocent priests were sacrificed on that occasion, whose blood may God not lay to my charge.

The Spanish ambassador, Don Bernardino de Mendoza was also implicated in the plot; he was compelled to leave London at once. The King of Spain appointed him to the post of ambassador in Paris, and it was natural to suppose that he would lose no opportunity of revenging himself on Elizabeth and Burghley for his abrupt and ignominious dismissal. My uncle gave me instructions to watch Mendoza narrowly, and sent over some of his most experienced spies to work under my orders. Before long we got wind of a new design, of which, as it appeared, the King of Spain was this time the originator. This was hardly to be wondered at for Elizabeth had sent forces under the command of Leicester to aid the insurgents in the Netherlands, and the English fleet under Sir Francis Drake was laying waste the coast of Galicia and the Spanish colonies in the West Indies. But we were unable to learn anything further about this design, until the wretched apostate Gifford came to our help. About this man a few words must now be said, which will lead up to the subject of Babington's conspiracy.

Gilbert Gifford belonged to one of the best families in Staffordshire. For the sake of the Catholic faith, his father had been reduced from opulence to penury, and had spent long years in

prison. In order to secure a Catholic education for his son, a lad of remarkable talent, he sent him across the Channel, at the risk of incuring a severe penalty, to the seminary founded at Douay by Dr. Allen. The fact that the boy early evinced, besides considerable mental gifts, an unruly disposition, a frivolous character, and an utter indifference to religion, may have determined the father to confide his training to Catholic priests. He was removed by the hand of death before he had the sorrow of seeing how vain had been all his care on behalf of his son. In the class room Gilbert easily distanced his fellow pupils; and when the seminary was removed from Douay to Rheims, he was appointed Professor of Philosophy, although only twenty years of age. His lectures were admirable, but his morals left so much to be desired that after repeated admonitions and chastisements, his superiors threatened him with expulsion from the seminary. Thereupon he ran away, taking with him a sum of money which the Duke of Guise had given him as a benefaction to the seminary. In Paris, whither he betook himself, the misappropriated money was quickly squandered in riotous living. Like the Prodigal, he began to be in want; but he did not, like the Prodigal, return in contrition to his father saying: I have sinned before Heaven and before thee. On the contrary, the unhappy young man took another step on the downward road; he gave up his religion, and plunged into the abyss of unbelief.

Such were the circumstances in which Gifford found himself, when I accidentally made his

acquaintance about the new year 1586. We had met in a tavern, and hearing who I was, he had requested the host to introduce him to me, as a fellow-countryman of good family. As he was well, almost elegantly dressed, and knew very well how to behave, I invited him to sit down at my table, near to a warm fire. At first our conversation was on general topics, the state of England, the last news from the Low Countries; but presently, after casting more than once a cautious glance around him, to ascertain whether there was any one who understood English near enough to overhear us, he drew his seat closer, and said he wanted to say a word to me in confidence. He then offered his services to me as a spy. No one he asserted, could be found better able to serve England in this capacity than himself, since he came of an old Catholic family, and had the highest references, which would ensure him admittance to the salons of the Spanish ambassador, of Charles Paget, the exiled Archbishop of Glasgow, and gain for him the acquaintance of Thomas Morgan and other partisans of Mary Stuart. Provided, we would promise him the same remuneration which Walsingham's other spies received, we should have every reason to be content with the service he would render us.

I declared myself willing, at least to test his ability to serve us, and gave him a few sovereigns in advance. It was agreed between us, that we should meet at the same place a week hence, for it would have been imprudent in the highest degree for him to be seen at the English embassy, since

that would awaken the suspicions of Mary Stuart's party. We then parted. I cannot say how distasteful to me was intercourse with such traitors. It was, however, unavoidable, for the statesmanship of these days consisted to a great extent in the employment of these men, contemptible as they were in every respect. My uncle Walsingham himself expended enormous sums out of his private purse on these vile spies. There were more than a hundred in his pay, and the most valuable, although the most despicable of these were apostates and even fallen priests. The knowledge of this led me to form a very low opinion of the Popish clergy; I did not remember the old saying: *corruptio optimi pessima;* the higher the state, the more terrible the fall from it.

To make a long story short, Gifford showed himself to be a practised deceiver, for in a brief period he wormed himself into the confidence of the Archbishop of Glasgow and of Thomas Morgan. The latter had been a primary factor in the first scheme for liberating the Queen of Scots, and Elizabeth would gladly have sent him to the gallows. But he slipped through her Majesty's fingers, and escaped to Paris; Elizabeth sent the Order of the Garter to Henry III., in order to induce him to surrender the conspirator to her, and the king, not daring to comply with her demand, yet desirous to show himself her friend, consigned him to the Bastille. This did not prevent him from taking part in all the intrigues set on foot in behalf of Mary Stuart, for the French policy at that time, was to play a double game. Gifford shrewdly

guessed that Morgan was the chief concocter of the new plot, and so artfully did he dissemble and deceive him, that he was soon in possession of important facts. His method was to act the part of a zealous Catholic, and feign an enthusiastic attachment to the Queen of Scots. He even devised a crafty plan whereby letters could be conveyed to her without the knowledge of her jailer. As the partisans of the royal captive desired above all things to find some means of carrying on a secret correspondence with her, Gifford appeared to Morgan in the light of an auxiliary sent by Heaven. He furnished him with letters of recommendation to Chateauneuf, the French ambassador in London, who had hitherto refused to comply with the request that he would convey letters to the Queen of Scots. Mendoza was in like manner deceived; he too trusted the hypocrite, who simulated the utmost devotion to the Catholic cause, and whom the more cautious Morgan had already taken into his confidence.

Thus by the beginning of March Gifford was able to give me the particulars of two plots to effect the release of the Queen of Scots, which were already being carried out to some extent. Of these one was the work of a certain Mr. Babington, who had gathered around him a few young Catholic noblemen with whose co-operation he hoped to set the Queen free by some *coup de main*. This same Babington had been in Paris in February, and had been carrying on negotiations with Morgan and other of the exiles. But the whole thing seemed very vague, and savoured more of a boyish adventure

than a serious enterprise. During his sojourn in Paris Babington had spent more time on the amusements of the carnival than preparations for a political action, although he had been in communication with the Duke of Guise. — The other project was of far greater moment; Philip II. was at last preparing in earnest for a descent upon England. The Prince of Parma was appointed leader of the expedition, and the other arrangements were now being concluded; Mary Stuart's hand was promised to the Prince, and in order to concert operations with the captive Princess, her friends were desirous to make use of the method of communicating with her, which Gifford had suggested.

This information appeared to me so trustworthy and so important, that I forthwith despatched a special messenger to carry it in cipher to my uncle Walsingham. By the same messenger he sent me back word, to come to London, without my departure being known, if possible, and to bring Gifford with me. This I did in the commencement of April.

CHAPTER XIII.

Sir Francis Walsingham allows his nephew St. Barbe to see his hand in the game he is playing.

On my arrival in London, Walsingham bestowed on me great praise for the wisdom I had shown in this most important business. He told me that the services I had rendered to her Majesty's government and to the Protestant religion in England were more considerable than I was aware of, and that if I assisted him in bringing the intrigue, he had then in hand to a successful conclusion with equal prudence and sagacity, he would prevail upon her Majesty to confer upon me the honour of knighthood and make me a member of the Privy Council. He added that I might also reckon confidently upon obtaining the favour of the omnipotent Lord Burghley and the hand of his charming daughter.

After these introductory remarks, he took me into his own private cabinet, to which until then I had but rarely been admitted, carefully closed the door, and bade me take a seat by the fire, in front of which he pushed a small table. On this he placed two finely cut glasses, filling them with old crushed port from a decanter that he took out of a cupboard in the wall. He then seated himself beside me, and sipping from time to time the generous liquor with evident appreciation of its fine flavour, spoke thus to me: "Your health, my dear Francis. It has long been my habit when I have any specially important business to consider, to

drink a glass of this old port—only one glass, and that slowly. And you would do well to do the same. It quickens ones pulses, and you cannot think how many fortunate inspirations I owe to it. Well, we have an important matter to consider now. You will not be surprised when I tell you, that from the standpoint of a loyal Englishman and a zealous partisan of the Reformation, I consider Mary Stuart as our most dangerous enemy."

With this I concurred, for since her right as the granddaughter of Henry VII. to the throne of England was indisputable, and considering Elizabeth's age it could hardly any longer be hoped that she would marry, still less have any legitimate issue, the probability was that Mary would succeed her, and thereby the maintenance of the reformed religion be imperilled. I said as much to my uncle, who listened patiently and then replied:

"I do not think there is much cause for anxiety on that score. Burghley has taken good care that Mary's fair name should be tarnished with a blot of which—whether she is innocent or not—the English Parliament can make use for the purpose of setting aside her right, that you consider indisputable. Our Parliament has brought more difficult things to pass than that during the last half century. No, the only chance Mary Stuart has of ascending the throne would be by a successful rising of the Catholics within the country, or through the invasion of a foreign power, on support of her claims. The first contingency is no longer to be dreaded. The case was very different eighteen years ago, when the Pope deposed Eliz-

abeth, and the most influential lords in the North took up arms. The fate of the new Queen and the new religion then hung upon a thread. Burghley completely lost his head, and the hour of peril showed him to be nothing of a statesman, however clever he may be as an intriguer. If Alba had appeared off the coast of Yorkshire at that juncture with half a dozen galleons, and landed a regiment of his redoubtable Spaniards, Mary Stuart would now be Queen, and the Smithfield fires would blaze afresh. That danger was happily averted, contrary to all expectations, and the deluded insurrectionists, by order of the Queen, who on this occasion proved herself to be a true daughter of Henry VIII., expiated their folly with their lives. Whole villages were depopulated. Since that time every year renders it less probable that such a rising would end in aught but failure. The number of Catholics has melted away; only in Lancashire and some of the northern counties, are they a small majority, and the nobles who still cling to the old creed, are gradually being ruined by enormous fines. Very soon all the wealthy Papists will be reduced to beggary.

Far more cause have we for alarm concerning the other danger that threatens us. As long as Mary Stuart is alive, our Popish fellow-countrymen will exert themselves to bring about a Spanish invasion. You remember the conspiracy of Ridolfi. Two years ago a scheme was afloat of a similar nature; now for the third time we are menaced by the same danger, and in a worse shape than heretofore. Once more I repeat: we shall

never enjoy tranquillity as long as Mary Stuart is a prisoner in England. Hence her death becomes a political necessity."

Walsingham uttered the last words in a low tone, but with deliberation and emphasis. He then raised his glass to his lips again, and silence prevailed until I remarked:

"Uncle, you said, 'as long as she is a prisoner in England'. Supposing she were set at liberty?"

"She would have been set at liberty long ago," he rejoined, "if she would have agreed to two conditions, the surrender of her claim to the throne, and the adoption of the reformed religion. During eighteen years of captivity the foolish woman has obstinately refused to do either the one or the other; the first through love for her son, who certainly repays her maternal affection in the most exemplary manner; the second on account of that inconceivable fanaticism which few but Papists display. You will live to see Henry of Navarre turn his back on Calvin and go piously to mass, though he now denounces it as an abominable idolatry. If Mary Stuart had adopted the tenets of Knox, the Lords of the Covenant would have held her to be a virtuous Queen, even were she in reality guilty of her husband's murder, which those worthy nobles laid to her charge. And if she had abjured Popery when in England, she might perchance have been raised to the throne. In a word, she has rejected the conditions on which her liberty was offered her, and they cannot be dispensed with. If she were released and sent to Scotland, we should be placing her son, who is a

Protestant and our ally, in a most difficult position. Fourteen years ago, when Morton was regent, the Lords of the Covenant demanded her surrender; they would have taken her into custody on the frontier, tried and executed her forthwith. But the proposal came to nothing, because of the somewhat extravagant demands of these godly folk, and the parsimoniousness of our Queen. A few thousand pounds might then have secured England and the Reformation from all further fear on account of Mary Stuart. But Elizabeth wanted to do things more cheaply, bad policy, in my opinion. Thus Scotland is out of the question as a home for her; still more France or Spain. Her death is the only solution of the difficulty."

The words of Caiphas occurred to my mind as I listened to my uncle. But I remembered that shortly after her flight to England, the Queen of Scots had been pronounced guilty by the Judicial Court at Westminster of complicity in the murder of Darnley; and the hatred to her, implanted in my mind in my boyish days, led me to say that she ought to be condemned and executed. Walsingham looked at me sarcastically as he sipped his wine.

"Undoubtedly," he replied. "There are, it is true, some legal niceties, but an able diplomat need not let them stand in his way. Burghley represented to the Queen long since that it would be well in self-defence to make short work with her detested rival. Justice would warrant such a measure; and deeds of that nature are, God knows, of no infrequent occurrence in the annals

of our country. The Queen would only be too well pleased, that is, of course she would openly feign great indignation, and send the executor of her secret wishes to the gallows as his reward, in public testimony to her innocence. She has not learnt in vain in the school of Machiavelli. No one has however as yet been found to carry out her wishes. Last autumn the prisoner was consigned to the charge of a fresh jailer, Sir Amias Paulet, a rough fellow, who hates her with the hate of hell. I know on good authority that he was informed of the Queen's desire. But the man is either too honourable or too prudent; he declared that if they sent the hangman to him with a warrant signed and sealed, he would make him welcome and leave him free to perform his duty. But it was no use to talk to him about such wishes, since he would neither carry them out himself nor depute another to do so, as long as Mary Stuart was in his custody. Thus we should be no nearer our end now than we were eighteen years ago, but for some young Popish noblemen who are playing into our hands."

I looked up in surprise, and my uncle continued, a slight smile playing round his lips: "We have to thank you, my dear Frank, for putting us on the track of a delightful little conspiracy. Acting upon the information you gave me, I took steps to ascertain what truth there was in the statements made by Gifford—who appears a most useful fellow—in respect to Mr. Babington. It proved to be a fact that he and half-a-dozen young noblemen of his own age and Papists like

himself, have formed a league with the object of liberating Mary Stuart. They hold their meetings at the *Blue Boar* in St. Giles-in-the-fields. This was notified to me some months ago; but I thought they were so young and so gay, that they only met for their sports, and could do no worse mischief than perhaps render assistance to some of the seminary priests and Jesuits who are prowling about. However I bade my spies to keep their eye on them, and I find Gifford is right, they are hatching a plot for the release of the Queen of Scots. It appears to be a romantic sort of affair, for the good lads have not a spark of practical common sense amongst them. Look at Babington; he is brave and venturesome enough, but how vain and frivolous! Three or four others excel in sports, football and the like, and there are a couple of poets to boot. They have probably read in their schoolbooks: *Dulce et decorum est pro patria mori!* and they think themselves called to heroic deeds. I am sorry for the silly fellows. Unless I help them, they will never attain the honour they covet."

"You mean," I said, "as soon as you have the necessary proofs, to arrest them and put them on the rack to make them confess, and so nip the conspiracy in the bud."

"I should have expected more sense from you my dear Frank," rejoined my uncle. "I have already told you, this conspiracy is a perfect godsend to us. Joking apart, I shall do everything I can to make it easy for these young gentlemen to carry out their project — up to a certain point, of course. Do you not see how it will be a means of bringing about the death of our enemy?"

I thought for a moment, then I suggested that he should lay an ambush of armed men who would cut off their flight, and put them and the Queen to death.

Walsingham smiled as he answered: "The same idea occurred to me. But I think we shall not let them go so far as that. Sir Amias Paulet has written orders from the Privy Council, in case of any attempt at escape, to take the life of his prisoner at once. He has promised to do this, and he will keep his word without scruple. A sudden and violent death would not however look well for the Government. I should very much prefer that Mary Stuart should *in forma juris* be condemned to death before a tribunal composed of the first nobles of the land. That would give the matter a better appearance in the eyes of foreigners, and our own people could cast no reproach on the Government. Mr. Babington and his colleagues are going to help us to obtain such a judgment. Reach down the statute book of the last Parliament, and turn to the new enactment 27th of Elizabeth, concerning conspiracies against the life of the Queen."

I did as he desired, and read the statute which ordained, with every possible proviso, that every person who should participate in a conspiracy against Elizabeth's life, was to be put on trial for his life before a Court of twenty-four Commissioners, to be nominated by the Crown.

"*Every* person," Walsingham repeated. "What does that signify? What is the object of this new law? It was not wanted for the conviction of English subjects who conspire against the life of

their Sovereign. The object is therefore to bring within reach of the headsman's axe *every* person whatsoever, be their rank and prerogatives the highest. In a word, the bill was framed and passed to provide against the very contingency which we have been supposing."

"A most wise and judicious measure," I replied. "But there is no question now of a plot against Elizabeth's life, only of Mary Stuart's rescue. Moreover she appears, as far as we know, to be in ignorance of the existence of the conspiracy."

"It is very plain, my dear Frank," rejoined my uncle, "that you are not sufficiently well versed in the ways of Machiavelli. Do you really imagine that Mary Stuart, after eighteen years of captivity, unjust captivity, knowing as she does that Elizabeth has designs upon her life, would not repay her royal sister in the same coin, were the opportunity afforded her? Doubtless she would authorize these young gentlemen to remove Elizabeth out of the way, if that were the only means of attaining her end. If proof were wanted, we need only apprehend them, and put them to torture, and I will engage that as soon as they felt the thumbscrew, or found themselves in the embrace of the scavinger's daughter, not to speak of the other pretty toys in the Tower, one or other of the six would soon confess that Mary Stuart was privy to their designs against Elizabeth. But we can manage without coming to the torture chamber. This Gifford, whom you brought with you from Paris, has devised a most ingenious plan for the exchange of letters

between the conspirators and the captive Queen. If they fall into his trap, as I have no doubt they will, we shall be able, within the space of a few weeks, to produce in black and white ample proof of the complicity of Mary Stuart with Babington and his comrades in a plot against Elizabeth's life. The matter appears to me perfectly certain. That is why I said that Babington's conspiracy exactly corresponded to my wishes. Now do you understand me?''

I answered that I did, and that I admired my uncle's acuteness. Of course I was heartily willing to co-operate with him, as the welfare of her Majesty and the stability of the reformed religion were at stake. We must adopt the maxim that the end justifies the means, and as this principle was learnt in the Jesuits' school, we might console ourselves with the knowledge that we were turning their own weapons against them. My uncle laughed, and said he must confess he had never heard that saying from the lips of a Jesuit, but that every diplomat acted upon it, as nothing could be done in statecraft unless it were followed.

Finally I asked him what he thought of Parma's scheme, and what measures he intended to take against it. He shrugged his shoulders, and said the project might take definite shape, but not for some time yet. He had learnt through Cherelles, one of the French ambassador's secretaries, that a packet of letters to Mary Stuart had long lain at the embassy awaiting delivery. These letters he hoped through Gifford, who was highly recommended to the ambassador, to get into his own hands,

and acquaint himself with their contents. The best thing to be done at present was to get the Queen of Scots out of the way. That would completely take the wind out of their sails, and render a Spanish invasion little short of purposeless. Now, while Philip could hope to set Mary Stuart upon the throne, and to place the Prince of Parma by her side it was quite a different thing; whereas were she once dead, a descent upon England would appear like reprisals, and it is highly questionable whether he would fit out his galleons for such a purpose. Philip was far too wise to attempt a war of conquest, or to dream of the possibility of placing the crown of England on the head of a Spanish prince. He would find he had opponents more difficult to deal with than the Dutch, though he had enough on his hands with them just then.

"What we have to do now," he said in conclusion, "is to carry out our design in regard to the Queen of Scots. The first step is for Gifford to lay his toils, in order to intercept the correspondence between Babington and the prisoner. Then we will leave Babington and his friends to do their work; they must be closely watched, but not allowed to suspect that their movements are observed. And when the right moment comes, the fowler will pull the string, and the six green finches, together with the royal bird, will be fluttering in his net. With ordinary prudence and determination we cannot fail of success."

So saying Walsingham filled our glasses again with the ruby coloured wine, and bade me drink to the prosperity of Babington's conspiracy, which was to bring about the end we desired.

CHAPTER XIV.

The reader is shown how the snare is laid, and is introduced to an "honest man".[1])

My uncle, whose custom it was to set his agents to watch one another, consigned the unhappy apostate Gifford to the charge of Thomas Philipps and Arthur Gregory, two spies, or members of his secret police, who lived in St. Paul's Churchyard. With them Gifford, who had been introduced to them under the name of Nicholas Cornelius, took up his abode, and they seldom let him out of their sight. Walsingham went to see him there one evening, carefully disguised, for he could not let him go to his own house. What was then concerted between them, I did not know until later.

My uncle had already mentioned to me one of the secretaries of the French ambassador, named Cherelles, whom he had bribed, a young man, leading a gay life, and head and ears in debt through gambling. He was one of those men who are ready to sell their own soul to the devil and their master's secrets to his enemy for the sake of a handful of gold. Through him Walsingham learnt that Chateauneuf [2]) had received instructions to

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[1]) The brewer from the neighbouring town of Burton, between whom and Paulet it was arranged that he should deliver to Paulet every parcel he might receive either from Gifford to Mary, or *vice versa*, was known under the derisive soubriquet of the "honest man". (Cfr. Lingard's History of England, vol. vi, p. 200.)

[2]) Cf. Hosack 1, c. ii, p. 322.

exert himself on behalf of Mary Stuart, as much as possible, without attracting observation and especially to expedite her correspondence. The private secretary of the ambassador, Cordaillot by name, was intrusted with the interests of the royal captive, and the packet of letters of which Cherelles had spoken, were in his safekeeping. Since the Qneen of Scots had been removed from Tutbury to Chartley, and Sir Amias Paulet had replaced Sir Ralph Sadler as her guardian, no letters had been permitted to reach her. What Walsingham wanted Gifford to do was to obtain possession of these letters under the promise of forwarding them to Mary and then place them in his hands. For this his reward was to be £100.

Gifford was introduced to Cordaillot by Cherelles. His Catholic name, and the excellent recommendations he had brought from Paris, carried weight; also the scheme he had concocted appeared feasible. Cordaillot spoke to his master in Gifford's favour, and asked permission to entrust the letters to him. But M. de Chateauneuf was a very cautious man, and he distrusted Gifford. Therefore, after questioning him narrowly, he dismissed him with polite phrases, to the effect that he was glad to see a young man of good family displaying such zeal for the Catholic cause, and he would let him know if his services were required. For the present there was nothing of importance to be forwarded.

"What a fox the man is?" my uncle exclaimed, when Gifford communicated to him in writing the result of his first attempt. "At any rate, it

proves to me that the letters are of the greatest consequence. Chateauneuf intends to send a messenger to Mendoza and Morgan, to convince himself that the letters of recommendation are not forgeries. We must have patience for another week."

Walsingham's surmise was correct. We heard from Cherelles that a messenger was despatched that very day to Paris; and about a week later Gifford was summoned to the embassy. The report must have been satisfactory, yet M. de Chateauneuf was too wary to commit himself to the proposed plan without a trial. He therefore gave Gifford a letter which compromised nobody, as it was merely an inquiry after the Queen of Scot's health. This letter was opened by Arthur Gregory, and after a copy of it had been taken by Philipps, it was fastened again so skillfully that no one could have discerned the least fault in the seal, for Gregory and Philipps were marvellously expert at such manipulation, and on that account their services were well remunerated. When my uncle read the letter, he exclaimed: "That is just what I expected, an experiment on Chateauneuf's part. Francis, you must ride to Chartley to-morrow and give Sir Amias Paulet my instructions. Gifford can go by another road with one of my people and try his luck."

Accordingly the next day I started on my way. The distance to Chartley, which is on the borders of Staffordshire and Derbyshire, not far from Burton-on-Trent, is 130 miles, so that it took me two days hard riding, to get there. As Walsingham's nephew I was well received by Sir Amias, uncivil

though he was at his best. He asked me whether at last I was bringing her Majesty's command that the head of the Moabitish woman, who angered his just soul with her idolatries, was to fall by the executioner's axe? And on my replying in the negative, he grumbled and snarled like the old bear that he was. When I explained that my coming and Walsingham's message were to prepare the way for what he desired, his temper improved a little. I proceeded to tell him of the trap that was to be laid for his prisoner, and that as soon as we had obtained proof in writing that she had designs upon Elizabeth's life, she would be arraigned before a criminal court, in accordance with the new statute. At that he looked well pleased; however he paced to and fro in the room muttering to himself for a while, then he stopped in front of me and said:

"Mr. St. Barbe, you must know that all these tricks and stratagems to which diplomatists like your uncle have recourse, I loathe from my heart; for I hold with the precepts of the Gospel, which says: Let your speech be yea, yea; no, no; and that which is over and above these is of evil." But we also read in the Scriptures: "With what measure you mete, it shall be measured to you again." And this text reconciles me to the wily ways, whereby it is proposed to ensnare this woman for the furtherment of the pure Gospel, of which she is so stiffnecked an opponent. For I consider her to be as full of guile as any of the serpents the Papacy has ever bred! So let this Gifford come, and see what he can accomplish, but

let him beware of foul play! I shall keep a strict eye upon him, and shall run both him and her through with my sword, if he turns traitor. She shall not escape from my guardianship alive, unless the devil flies away with her to his own place.''

Sir Amias said these last words in so spiteful a manner that a cold shiver ran over me. For some time he continued his denunciations of idolatry, similar in most respects to those uttered by the Jewish prophets of old. Presently, having vented his spleen, he came and sat down beside me, and, at my request, began to talk about his prisoner. She would not be persuaded, he said, to join the household at their devotions, nor would she listen to the pure word of God from the lips of the zealous and god-fearing preacher Bitterstone, who held forth to the elect people of God, for half an hour every evening, as the Spirit moved him. Instead of that, she and her attendants, with the secretaries Nau and Curle, knelt before a crucifix or an image of the Madonna, and pattered out the rosary, or some cursed idolatrous nonsense. She would only too gladly have the abomination of the mass, if he would let one of the priests of Baal come under his roof; hitherto he had succeeded in preventing that, although to his great astonishment the Queen, who was unfortunately not altogether innocent of a leaning to Popery, had granted permission to his prisoner to have one of these servants of the devil about her. Then he begged me not to repeat what he had let slip in the heat of his just wrath, for not very long since, Elizabeth had

condemned one John Stubbs to have his right hand chopped off by the hangman, for over-great freedom of speech when expounding the Gospel. With regard to Mary Stuart however, her bitterest enemy must admit that apart from her former crimes and her persistent adhesion to Roman errors, she was not so bad after all. She displayed in general far more patience than he would have thought possible in such a child of hell, and she even made a show of Christian charity, for he had overheard her praying for the Queen, and also for himself. He did not allow himself to be deceived by appearances, for he knew full well that the devil can assume the form of an angel of light, and that true beliefs are the only solid ground of justification. Instead of that she trusted to good works, according to the Popish teaching, as I should see in the afternoon, when she distributed her daily alms to the beggars who came from all the country round to Chartley, as they used to do in the old Popish times, to get the doles given away at the funeral of some person of standing in the country, to release his soul from purgatory.

We were still conversing in this way when we heard the sound of wheels in the courtyard and a clamour of voices. My companion ran to the window and exclaimed: "Here is the man we want, the very fellow your Gifford, or whatever his name is, spoke of."

I too went to the window, and looking out, I saw a heavy wagon drawn by two horses crossing the courtyard. On the driver's seat was an immensely corpulent man, resembling in shape the

beer barrels with which the dray behind him was loaded.

"That is Tommy Bulky, the 'honest brewer', on whom Gifford put his finger," Paulet said to me. "He brings over the beer from Burton every Monday, and I think he is just the man to answer our purpose. We must go down to the porter's lodge to speak to him, for such a barrel as he is cannot well be got upstairs."

This was apparent enough from the difficulty the good man had at alighting from the wagon. The servants brought a short pair of steps of solid oak, part of the side of the wagon was removed, and Tommy advanced one of his legs of elephantine thickness, encased in dirty leathern breeches, placing it cautiously on the topmost step of the ladder. Although I was in no merry mood, I could not forbear laughing as I watched him, and even the features of my morose companion relaxed into a smile, as he compared the "honest brewer" of Burton to the obese king of Amalek.

In going down to the porter's lodge we found our man sitting on a bench, still panting and puffing from the exertion of alighting from the wagon. His fat arms were propped upon the table, and he wiped the perspiration from his brow with his apron as he greeted the knight respectfully, and gave me a searching look from under his bushy eyebrows. I saw in a moment that the fellow was a sly dog. Sir Amias told him I was nephew to Secretary Walsingham, and had come down from London about a little business. The brewer gave me another sharp look with a rather unceremonious

nod, and continued to wipe his bald head. Sir Amias then sent the porter over to the *Mayflower*, a tavern in the vicinity, where Gifford, who must have got there by that time, was to lodge, with orders to bring him over at once.

Meanwhile the "honest brewer" had recovered his breath. After he had taken a long draught out of a huge tankard that stood on the table, he said, as he wiped the foam from his beard: "I was once in London, sir, I shall never go there again. Bad beer there, sir, vile stuff, not fit for a Christian to drink. Before I had drank a dozen mugs of it, I had the gripes, as if I had the devil himself inside me. I warrant you, sirs, I had to pay more for physic than for my victuals that time. Men who brew such ale ought to be drowned in their own vats, that would serve them right. Pure Gospel and good beer, I say. But it appears in these days, the purer the doctrine, the worse the beer, although my good master here will not have that it is so. Our Burton ale is still excellent, sir, mine is at any rate. But the ditchwater they drink in the country round has so brought down our prices that upright folk will soon have to beg their bread, as sure as my name is Tommy Bulky."

Then I said that the Burton ale was renowned for its excellence all over England, and I was sorry that he and his brother-brewers did not make the business answer well. On that account I was all the more glad to be able to put him in the way of getting a little money. On hearing this, he set down the tankard which he was in

the act of carrying to his lips, and listened to me attentively. In a few words I told him about the matter; that my uncle had discovered a conspiracy of some young Popish gentlemen, who wanted to carry on a correspondence with the captive Queen of Scots, and who had fixed upon him for their middle man. Here the brewer interupted me by bringing his fist down upon the table with such violence that the tankard was nearly upset. Did he, he asked with an oath, look like one who would be a traitor to the Queen? If the Papists required such things of him, he would stave in their heads with his fist as if they were rotten casks.

I had some trouble to pacify him, and make him understand what it was, I meant. It was not the conspirators themselves who had fixed upon him, but one whom Walsingham had got in among them to act as a decoy bird and who knew that the honest brewer could be thoroughly relied upon. Did he now catch my meaning? Bulky only replied with a sly wink and a low whistle. If he managed the affair successfully, I continued, Walsingham promised him a bounty of £10, for the payment of which Sir Amias would be witness and surety. How much he should demand from the other parties, from the Queen of Scots' secretary, on the one hand, and from the Popish gentlemen on the other, I should leave to him, as I did not doubt he would know how to bleed them both freely. The only stipulation to be made was that all should be arranged so craftily that both the conspirators and the inmates of the castle should fall into the trap, and

should be convinced that he was dealing with them in good faith. Moreover, it was agreed that all the letters before being given to the Queen's secretary or delivered to the Popish gentlemen, as the case might be, should be left for one night with an agent of Walsingham's, who would lodge near his brewery at Burton.

After I had clearly explained everything to him, and even at his request given him my instructions in writing, with my own signature and that of Paulet attached to them, the honest brewer declared himself ready to do our bidding, and swore upon the Bible, that he would carry it out exactly, and give up all the letters confided to him. With a well satisfied smile he pocketed the gold piece I gave him into the bargain, emptied the tankard at one draught, and said: "Gentlemen, it is a fine thing when one can serve the Gospel and her Majesty the Queen, whom God preserve, and do onesself a good turn at the same time. May the devil fetch me bodily—not a very easy task with a man of my weight by the bye—if I do not prove worthy of my Lord Secretary's trust!"

Having given utterance to these forcible words, my man rose to his feet, not without an effort, and prepared to depart. We told him he had better wait a few moments longer, as we wanted him to make the acquaintance of the men with whom he would have to consult and combine. So he dropped down on the bench again, saying we could imagine that he could not bear standing, and begging that he might have a second tankard of ale, as there was not a more thirsty soul than himself. Ere

long Gifford and Philipps made their appearance, and the three strange comrades soon came to an understanding.

I may as well here mention briefly the manner in which the honest brewer proposed to lay his toils. He was not only a brewer by trade, but an accomplished cooper, and could both make and mend his barrels and casks. Gifford knew this, and he therefore asked him if it were not practicable to make a false bottom to one of the barrels, so that a flat tin case, containing the letters wrapped in parchment, could be slipped into the empty partition. Nothing could be simpler, Bulky answered; adding that he could insert a spring in one of the staves exactly opposite to the vent-hole, which would enable the false bottom to be opened, and the letters put into, or withdrawn from the receptacle. [1]) I was astonished at Gifford's device, and the readiness with which the brewer took it up.

"There is only one difficulty that I see," he said at length. "How is Nau, the Queen's secretary, to be informed of the construction of the new cask, which I will make by next Monday?"

"That is easily arranged," I replied. "You have only to write on a piece of paper a few words to the effect that the Queen's friends have found a means of conveying secret intelligence to her and of learning her wishes, and telling them to press the middle stave of the barrel, where there is a spot of tar. The master brewer must contrive to slip the paper into the hand of the servant who takes

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[1]) Ibid. ii, p. 336.

the cask, and all will go smoothly, for Sir Amias will wink at it."

In reality all did go smoothly with our plan, and I feel myself to have been an accomplice in the treachery, and in its fatal consequences. May God in his mercy pardon me.

CHAPTER XV.

Two Queens, and what St. Barbe thought about them.

The hope that the scheme which we had just been concocting would prove a sure and speedy means of bringing his prisoner to the block, put Sir Amias in the best of humours. He entertained me right royally at dinner, regaling me, not only with the excellent Burton ale, but with a bottle of choice wine, wherein to drink her Majesty's health and destruction to all her enemies.

Presently he said that it was now time, if I wanted to see the Queen of Scots amongst the beggar-folk. Of course I was anxious to see her, whom from my tenderest years, I had been taught to regard as the arch-enemy of the word of God. Paulet conducted me into another apartment, whence a view of the courtyard was to be obtained. The outer gate was closed, and guarded by a few armed men. On the steps leading to a side door in the opposite wing of the building a considerable number of poor and afflicted persons were congregated. Cripples were there, resting on their crutches; the patient blind, with children to lead them; sufferers pale and emaciated, displaying hideous sores, and clothed in scanty and ragged garments. There were about half-a-hundred of them, and Paulet told me there were four times as many waiting outside, but he did not allow more than four dozen to be let in, and they were watched, lest they should bring in, or carry away any messages. Then he fell to abusing the whole pack

of mendicants, declaring they would all return to the abomination of Popery to-morrow, for the sake of the monks who gave victuals to them daily at the monastery gates.

While he was discoursing after this fashion, the bell in the turret struck three. At the first stroke, the mendicants began to bestir themselves; they pressed towards the side door, which was opened almost immediately to give egress to a queenly figure, habited entirely in black, with a white widow's veil. She was accompanied by one or two waiting women. The people flocked around her with respectful familiarity. "There she is," said Paulet, the one in black with the veil; that is the Jezabel, and may Jezabel's fate be hers!

I cannot say that I was inclined to echo the wish of my Puritan host. There was in my nature too much of human kindness, despite my early training and teaching, to allow me to look unmoved upon the spectacle before me. Mary Stuart appeared far from well; it was not without difficulty that leaning upon a stick and the arm of one of her attendants, she descended the stone steps, and seated herself upon a chair which her Secretary Mr. Nau placed for her. She then threw back her veil. Her countenance had been robbed of its bloom by long years of captivity; it was pale, almost sallow, and apparently slightly swollen. Yet I thought I had never gazed on features so beautiful and so dignified; they bore the stamp of gentleness and serenity; the expression of her large dark eyes was kindly in the extreme. A benign smile played about her

lips, which were almost colourless, while with her own hand she distributed her alms to each applicant in turn; she seemed to know them all, and had a friendly word for every one. To some she gave money, more or less according to their needs, from a purse which her Secretary held for her; to others she gave a loaf of bread from a basket carried by one of her maidens.

"At one time," remarked Sir Amias, "she attempted to teach the children the soul-destroying doctrines of Antichrist, and make them pray to the Virgin and the Saints. But I put a stop to that, and she does not dare now to infect the souls of the people with that poison."

"She does not seem in good health," I observed. "Her complexion is bad, and she looks as if she were suffering."

"Yes, yes;" he replied, stroking his grizzly beard, "that comes from confinement and want of exercise. When she was at Tutbury, Sir Ralph Sadler used from time to time let her go out heron-hawking. Now I keep her much stricter. Since Christmas she has never once been beyond these walls, and the apartments are rather fusty, and not over well heated. I had instructions too from the Privy Council not to provide a very generous table for her. At one time I thought she had dropsy, and would not live long. But now that the weather is improving, it seems almost as if she were getting well again, like a bird after moulting. In fact she may live to spite me and other people for a good many years to come, if the executioner does not make short work with her.

She uses a stick because of rheumatism, for the dampness of the old stone walls has got into her joints, so that she moans at night with the pain, and much I doubt whether she will get rid of it in the summer. Her hair has turned very grey this winter, though she is only fourty-four years of age. I believe the cause of that is her grief about the King of Scotland, her son, who foreswore the Popish errors and made himself Elizabeth's ally, without stipulating for his mother's release."

While Paulet was talking, I could not take my eyes from the royal lady. As I watched her giving bread to the hungry with loving condescension, the thought occurred to me that in the great day of reckoning our Lord would say to her: "Amen I say to you, as long as you did it to one of these my least brethren, ye did it to me." However I instantly repelled the idea as a temptation of the devil, so difficult is it to overcome the prejudices early instilled into one.

When half-past three struck, she forthwith rose, and supported by Nau and her maidens, slowly ascended the steps. At the door she paused, and turning once more towards the recipients of her bounty, took leave of them with a courteous inclination of the head, and disappeared from view. It surprised me that the mendicants let her depart in silence; no one uttered a word of thanks, except one or two children who were instantly hushed by their elders. My companion devined my thoughts, and in answer to them said that formerly there was such a clamour of thanks and blessings, that he had made a strict rule that any one who said a

word aloud should never be admitted again into the courtyard. That had been effectual, he said, in making them all as mum as fishes.

I made no rejoinder to the knight's remarks. The struggle had already commenced in my heart between divine grace and deep seated prejudice, and it was with me as it is with everyone who strives to close his ears to the inspirations of the Holy Ghost. I felt strangely dissatisfied and embittered, and could bear no longer to remain in the castle of which the royal lady, the sight of whom had had so powerful effect upon me, was an inmate. So I told Sir Amias that I must go as far as Bedworth or Rugby that evening, as I had to be back in London betimes the day after next, and asked him to order my horse to be brought round. He sent polite messages to my uncle, and promised to despatch a messenger on horseback as soon as there should be intelligence of any importance to communicate. He also undertook to look narrowly after Gifford and the brewer. Thus I rode away from Chartley with disquiet in my soul.

Walsingham received me most kindly, and rubbed his hands together delightedly when I gave my report. Then he said it was high time that I should put in an appearance at Court for a few days, to pay my devoirs to her Majesty, and recall myself at the same time to Miss Cecil's remembrance. He gave me some useful hints, as to what I should say and what I should leave unsaid. I was not to breathe a word about Babington's plans and our counter-plans; but I was to pay the most barefaced compliments to the Queen about her wit

and her beauty; it was incredible what an amount of flattery she would swallow. With Miss Cecil, who was of a graver disposition, I could get on very well, but with the Queen, I was much too guarded in my speech; I ought to imitate Sir Christopher Hatton, Sir Walter Raleigh, and other courtiers, and so on.

Accordingly early the next morning I repaired to Richmond, where the Court then was. In the ante-room I found a number of young noblemen, who greeted me most courteously. They had heard that I had only recently arrived from Paris, and I was overwhelmed with questions about the French Court and all manner of things. Happily for me, the great folding doors leading to the Royal apartments were soon rolled back; two of the Queen's body-guard carrying halberds, commonly called beef-eaters, from their attendance at the *buffetier*, or sideboard, placed themselves in the entry; the groom of the chambers with his silver staff called for silence, and announced that her Majesty would shortly appear. The courtiers ranged themselves on each side of the room, and in a few moments the Queen entered, with Lord Burghley at her side.

Elizabeth walked with her head more than usually erect, without taking the arm of the Lord Treasurer, as was her wont. This was a sign that she was not in the best of tempers; the peculiar expression on Burghley's countenance, and the evident perturbation of the two maids of honour who carried her long train, confirmed my suspicion. But Elizabeth was every inch a queen. Her rich apparel, consisting of a dress of crimson velvet

slashed with black, with a stomacher heavy with gold and silver embroidery and laden with jewels, over a green petticoat, also elaborately adorned, well became her commanding figure. With a proud, almost defiant look, she passed between the rows of obsequious courtiers. Involuntarily my thoughts recurred to the scene I had witnessed three days before at Chartley. I contrasted the elegant form, clad in simple black and leaning on a stick surrounded by a crowd of ragged medicants, with the haughty Sovereign in whose presence I stood. But I had little leisure to make comparisons. Elizabeth advanced with a firm step, addressing an observation to one or another of the courtiers, more often a word of sarcasm or reproof than of kindness or encouragement. Whoever she spoke to immediately fell on his knees. This was a new custom introduced by Elizabeth; the English nobility, accustomed to a certain freedom in their relations to their monarchs, were now obliged, with certain exceptions, to assume this humble attitude when speaking to the Queen.

On reaching the place where I stood, Elizabeth paused, and exclaimed, "What marvel is this! Here is Walsingham's nephew, concerning whose diplomatic astuteness such wonderful, and probably exaggerated reports have reached us, actually at last conferring on us the honour of his presence!"

I dropped on my knee, and begged for forgiveness, alleging that her Majesty's service had till then prevented me from seeking the light of her countenance, whose youthful bloom and beauty was enhanced rather than diminished by the lapse

of time since I last beheld it. I blush to recall the incense of flattery which I burnt at the altar of a woman already over fifty years of age; but I only carried out my uncle's injunctions, and employed the phrases he suggested. Thus I went on to say that what was said at the French Court appeared to be true, namely, that the gods had given to her Majesty the ambrosia of perpetual youth as the reward of virginity, since no natural means could avail to preserve her beauty thus undimmed by the hand of years.

She laughed and said I had learnt in the school of Catharine de Medici to make pretty speeches, and I must not think she believed a word of my flatteries, neatly turned though they were. Or perhaps Walsingham himself had taught me my lesson?

I answered (God forgive me) in the words of Holy Scripture: *Sapiens es sicut angelus Dei!* Nothing escapes your Majesty's penetration! True it is that my uncle spoke in similar terms of your Majesty's almost superhuman beauty, but now my own eyes tell me that far from saying too much, his expressions fell short of the truth.

A murmur of approval and assent ran through the assembled bystanders. The Queen gave me a gracious pat with one of the gold tassels hanging from her girdle, saying, "Rise up Master St. Barbe, and follow us in the hall of audience. We must have some conversation with you."

It was plain that the Queen's vanity was tickled, and it has always been a puzzle to me, how a rational being, perfectly aware of the falsity of

these flatteries, should still take pleasure in them. Many an envious glance was directed towards me, as I followed in the Queen's train. Amongst the maids of honour, I saw Miss Cecil. Our eyes met; I fancied I read in her glance something of annoyance, if not of scorn on account of the flatteries I had been uttering. The contemptibility of such hollow sycophancy was borne in upon me forcibly, and I felt heartily ashamed of myself.

While this was passing in my mind, the Queen had entered the audience chamber with her suite, and taken her seat on a gilt arm-chair, beneath a canopy of blue damask, the back of which was decorated with the royal arms and surmounted by a crown. On her right stood Lord Burghley; on her left the Lord Chamberlain. Besides myself a few of the nobles and ladies of the Court had the honour to be present at this audience, when various petitioners made their requests to the Queen. I do not remember what the petitions consisted in: they were of the nature usually asked of crowned heads. Elizabeth refused some with bitter irony; others she granted; almost invariably, she listened favourably to the application of Catholic nobles who having apostatized, asked for a share in the property of other members of the family, confiscated on account of the owner's adhesion to his faith. But these favours — the reward of apostasy — were often accorded grudgingly and scornfully, as one might throw a dog a bone and give him a kick at the same time.

Presently, it was my lot to witness a scene, which will ever remain impressed on my memory.

Lady Tregian was announced, and the Groom of the Chambers ushered in a gentlewoman of distinguished appearance, dressed in black, still young, but pale and worn with grief. She led by the hand two little boys, and a girl, wearing a white frock, held on to the skirt of her gown. On hearing the name of Tregian, an angry frown contracted Elizabeth's brow, this the lady appeared not to notice, at any rate she did not heed it, so bent was she on making her plaint or her petition heard. Throwing herself at the Queen's feet, with her children, she addressed her, at first with a trembling voice, but afterwards with the courage of despair, somewhat in this wise:

"Since your Majesty wields supreme power in this land, and is the earthly representative of the Divine Majesty, your subjects may claim your protection and help in their distress. I venture therefore to approach in my hour of trouble, and to implore for God's sake a gracious hearing on behalf of my unfortunate husband, who has languished in prison for many years, and on behalf of these innocent children."

Elizabeth interrupted her impatiently. "If we were to listen to the gossip of all the women in the kingdom," she said, "little time would be left for the weighty affairs of the State that engross our attention. Make your story short, good woman. Who are you? What do you want?"

A flush overspread the countenance of the suppliant, betraying the vexation aroused by this unkindly rebuff. Quickly mastering her emotion, she continued, with the utmost composure of man-

ner: "I am the unhappy wife of Lord Francis Tregian, who is distantly related to the Royal House of Tudor. We lived in peace and comfort at our Castle near Launceston in Cornwall, until on the testimony of a perjured villain, a wandering musician, bribed by our enemies to work our ruin, my husband was accused of harbouring a Seminary Priest, Cuthbert Maine, and under the Statute *Praemunire* condemned to loss of goods and chattels and imprisonment for life. I was then expecting the birth of my fourth child, and doubting not that so unjust a sentence—no less than forty witnesses having alleged the accusation to be false—would be reversed, I confidently awaited my husband's return. But instead of this, late one night some officers of the law presented themselves at our door and took possession, in virtue of the sentence, of all our property. Penetrating into the bed chamber, whither I had retired with the children, they turned us out in the dark and cold to take shelter in a barn until daybreak. I then resolved to seek justice at the hands of your Majesty, as the divinely appointed protector of the oppressed. We, the wife and children of Lord Tregian, begged our bread from village to village, from town to town, across England, all the long weary way from Cornwall to London. Our journey was not half over, when the baby was born; but no sooner could I drag my limbs onward than we started anew to throw ourselves on your compassion. Behold us now at your Majesty's feet! speak, my children, and say what I have taught you!"

Francis, the eldest boy, was about to speak;

he looked up at the Queen and the words died on his lips, so forbidding was the aspect of that royal lady. "She is angry, mother," he whispered. His little brother began to whimper; the little girl alone had the courage to repeat the formula she had been told to utter: "Please set father free. Let us go back to our home. I will pray to the holy Mother of God for your Majesty every day."

For a moment I thought that the Queen's heart would be melted, and her better nature prevail. I was mistaken. With a bitter, cynical laugh she turned to the Lord Chamberlain, whose office it was to prepare the list of petitioners to be given her, and said: "I thank you so much, my lord, for this charming little performance. The lady's gesticulation is excellent, she might with advantage play the part of Hecuba at the Globe theatre. She articulates well, also, only at times her manner is rather laboured. The children want practice, except the girl, she acted her part quite prettily. Give her a bright shilling, and a cake." Then completely changing her tone, she addressed Lady Tregian, who had risen to her feet, indignant at the scorn with which she was treated. "My lady," she said, "We will make as if we had not heard the heavy charges which you have dared to bring against our Law Courts and administration of Justice; there would otherwise be ample ground for committing you to the Tower. Have the goodness to answer one question: Is it not true that you and your husband are stubborn Papists? That you have refused to attend divine worship as by law established? That you will not acknowledge us

as the legitimate and supreme Head of the Church of England? Yes, or no?"

Lady Tregian answered calmly: "Certainly, your Majesty, we are true children of the ancient Faith. In all civil matters you have every claim on our obedience; but we can never, we will never recognize in you the successor of St. Peter to whom Christ said, "Thou art the rock, upon which I will build my Church!"

The Queen could no longer control her rage. "That is quite enough!" she exclaimed. "Begone, insolent woman, and beware how you venture again to intrude your hateful person into our royal presence. By the soul of king Henry, we are tempted to forget our characteristic gentleness and make such an example of you and your children that not only all England, but all Europe shall talk of it. The sentence of the Court will remain valid; your lord will not be set at liberty until he acknowledges us to be Supreme Head of the English Church, and attends divine service as we have ordained. As for you, you and your brats can beg in the streets, you certainly are not wanting in the requisite effrontery. Lieutenant of the Guard, conduct this woman and her children to the park gates, and send them away from thence. Under no circumstances are they ever to be admitted again."

Lady Tregian drew the weeping children to her side, made a deep curtsy to the Queen, and withdrew from the audience chamber, saying as she went, "May your Majesty find more mercy before the throne of God than you have shown to us!"

CHAPTER XVI.

St. Barbe has a private audience of the Queen, and is driven into a corner by Miss Cecil.

It is useless to commit to writing the abusive language in which Elizabeth continued to give vent to her anger after the persons who had provoked it had withdrawn. The whole scene affected me most disagreeably, the more so because Mary Stuart's charity towards the poor was yet fresh in my memory.

Presently the Queen rose, and was conducted by Lord Burghley into her private cabinet, whither I was shortly summoned. I found her seated at a writing table, on which was a pile of papers, occupied in tracing the large letters with flourishes forming her well-known signature. For a long time I remained standing unnoticed at the door, so that I had the opportunity of observing the subject of the Gobelin tapestry on the walls, and the sumptuous furniture of the apartment. The tapestry represented the finding of the infant Moses by Pharao's daughter; an inscription upon a scroll explaining that as Pharao's daughter saved Moses from death, so Elizabeth, the daughter of the heavenly King, had rescued the pure Gospel from the destruction wherewith the Pope, the Pharao of heathen Egypt, had threatened it.

At length the Queen looked up, laid aside the swan-quill in her hand, and beckoned to me not unkindly to approach. At three paces dis-

tant from her feet I knelt down; but she graciously bade me rise, and even take my seat upon a low stool. She addressed a great many questions to me about Paris, about the King and the Queen Mother, and I told her as many Court scandals as I could remember out of the number that are always rife in the French Court. She listened with a malicious pleasure; then she asked about the Duke of Guise, and what prospect there was for Henry of Navarre. I replied that he was almost certain of the crown, the only doubt being whether he would give up the reformed religion for the sake of it. "No," she replied, "everybody has not our courage. We might have had peaceful times, had we cast ourselves at the Pope's feet, and retained the fable of the mass. As it is, not only are the Papists incessantly plotting against us, but the Puritans also make our life a burden to us." She then began to speak of the situation of affairs in the Low Countries, and inquired what was thought of Leicester at Paris. As I knew that he no longer stood as high as he formerly did in his royal mistress' favour, I did not scruple to say that his achievements had disappointed the expectations formed of him; but the fortunes of war did not always correspond to the qualities and talents of great generals. "Qualities and talents!" she broke out. Dudley is an idle boaster, a *miles gloriosus*, and nothing more! To hear him talk you might fancy him a great conqueror, but he is a fool compared with Parma. And now, contrary to our express command, he

has arrogated to himself the title of Governor-General of the States. I have a good mind to recall him, and let him make a triumphal entry into the Tower! The support of the evangelical cause in the Netherlands has already cost us a mint of money; and it has struck me that the best way would be simply to surrender to the King of Spain the four seaports which were conceded to me by the treaty to hold as a security, on condition that he should refund us our war expenses, and do with the insurgents as seems right to his conscience and his honour as a king.[1]) That would be the surest means of concluding a permanent peace with Philip II, and once for all delivering our subjects from the apprehension of a Spanish invasion, which every year appears more alarming. What is your opinion?''

I was quite aghast at such a proposition, for it was nothing short of a shameful desertion of our allies. Yet I was enough of a courtier to mask the indignation it aroused within me, and reply that I was but an inexperienced youth, and could not venture to put forward my opinions in the presence of so wise and enlightened a monarch. The boldness of the scheme took away my breath; my only fear was that the abandonment of our Protestant brethren would bring us into ill odour with the partisans of the Reformation. Besides it seemed rather hazardous to have the Spaniards for such near neighbours. But doubtless this and all other considerations had been duly weighed long since by her Majesty. Feeling myself on dangerous

[1]) Hosack I, ch. ii, p. 322.

ground, for the sake of changing the conversation, I remarked that in accordance with my uncle's commands, I had visited Chartley a few days ago, to see whether the orders of the Privy Council in regard to their distinguished prisoner were fully carried out. At the mention of Mary Stuart, Elizabeth started as if she had been shot; her countenance twitched; one might have fancied that the crying injustice of which she was guilty towards that unhappy lady, suddenly appeared before her in its true colours. "How is that horrid Scotch-woman?" she inquired. "If my subjects only knew how long she has been a thorn in my side, how often the thought of her has cost me my night's sleep, some honest evangelical would have rid me of her, as Phineas removed the scandal from among the children of Israel. But all the time she pretends love and friendship for ourselves, calls us her 'dear sister', sends diamond rings, while she is weaving one plot after another against us, and would strangle us with her own hands if she could. Did you see her? How is she looking? and what is she doing?"

I depicted the Queen of Scots condition, the unhealthy pallour of her complexion, her gray hair, her feeble walk, and said Sir Amias Paulet was of opinion that besides the rheumatism from which she suffered, she had a great tendency to dropsy. Elizabeth would not believe this, she said the woman was an arrant hypocrite, and we must not for God's sake allow ourselves to be deceived by her, for if she were once at liberty, she would soon send her stick flying, and run about nimbly.

When I told the Queen how I had seen her in the courtyard amidst the beggars, thinking, like the simpleton I was, that it would touch her, she burst out right angrily. Did I not perceive, she exclaimed, that this was the way the viper wormed herself into the affections of the poor and the peasantry? That very day a messenger should be sent to Sir Amias to put a stop to this almsgiving, and order him to allow his prisoner no intercourse with the people. Thus I was the involuntary means, for which may God forgive me, of causing an order to be issued that added another to the many sorrows of the unhappy captive.

When Elizabeth's rage had subsided, she turned to another subject, beginning to speak to me about Lord Burghley's daughter. I felt very much embarrassed, as I did not know what she was driving at. She remarked my confusion, and was amused at it; she told me I was a naughty fellow, for a little bird had long since whispered to her that I was in love with the beautiful, clever and rich, very rich, Miss Cecil, and she admired my taste. Burghley, she said had taken care to feather his own nest well with the spoils of the Egyptians. And she thought she could assure me that of all the fortune hunters who paid court to the heiress, none was more favourably regarded than myself. She did not grudge me the preference shown me, for she considered I gave promise of great abilities, which would be of service to the State. I naturally was much gratified by these flattering words; and the Queen proceeded to say: "The interest I take in the young lady, as well as

in you, Mr. St. Barbe, makes me desirous to say a word to you. Miss Judith thinks a great deal too much; her mind runs upon religious questions; I even have reason to suspect that she is not so firm an Evangelical as one could wish, and hankers after the flesh-pots of Egypt, the old Popish leaven. On that account I am desirous you should come to Richmond. Do you talk to her on the subject, I will see that you have an opportunity this evening. She has confidence in you, and will speak much more openly to you than to her father. He has changed his creed too often, as the exigencies of the times demanded, for her to have much respect for his religious convictions. She corresponded with you about the vexed question of predestination; I read your answers, they did you great credit. I need not add that her perversion to Popery would forfeit all my favour, and involve the loss of all her property. So do what you can to discover what the girl really thinks, and if necessary, set her right."

Thereupon I was graciously dismissed from the royal presence. The audience had been of so unusual a length, that when I entered the antechamber, where Sir Walter Raleigh was waiting, that gentleman did not look at me in a very amiable manner, and several of the courtiers began to predict that Walsingham's nephew was the rising star, that is, the new favourite.

In the afternoon the sweet Spring weather tempted the Queen to walk abroad in the park, where the younger members of the Court were to engage in various sports. At a spot somewhat

higher up the river the royal barges were in attendance, to convey the whole company back to Richmond. The park, in the freshness of its early verdure, presented a gay scene, as the ladies and gentlemen, all splendidly attired, moved about the Queen, like butterflies, as some one remarked, hovering about a beauteous rose. I endeavoured to engage Miss Cecil in conversation, but I was unable to do so on account of the number of other aspirants after her favour. When the sun got low, Elizabeth, who had watched the games from a tent, rose, and taking the arm of the Earl of Essex, directed her steps along an avenue of oaks to the river side. The ladies and gentlemen in waiting and all the courtiers followed her.

On entering the barge, the Queen designated by name those of her suite who were to have the honour of remaining near her person. Miss Cecil was one, and I was another. Just at the moment of pushing off from the bank, Elizabeth missed a kerchief that she had worn around her neck. Supposing it to have been left in the tent, she requested Judith Cecil to go back and fetch it. All the gentlemen on board offered to accompany her, but the Queen singled me out as her escort.

As long as we could be seen from the river, we walked along in silence. But looking round, we became aware that the royal barge, together with the other boats, had put off, and were already under way.

"There now!" exclaimed Miss Judith, "the Queen might have waited a few moments for us! Now we shall have to walk back alone all the way through the park!"

"Miss Cecil," I replied, "I am delighted at the prospect of this walk through the quiet woods and meadows in your charming company. I would give up the honour of a place on the royal barge for it a thousand times over."

"I heard enough this morning, Mr. St. Barbe, to convince me that during your sojourn in Paris you have become an adept in the art of flattery," my companion rejoined somewhat ungraciously. "But I thought you knew me better than to address these empty compliments to me."

"I was afraid I had incurred your displeasure this morning," I resumed, "on account of my little exaggerations. I was half ashamed of them myself, and only made use of them in deference of my uncle's wishes, and because I thought they were expected of me. You may be assured I have no intention to flatter you; on the contrary, I mean to speak quite openly; so I begin by telling you, that the errand on which our Sovereign has sent us was only a pretext to give me an opportunity of conversing with you without fear of interuption."

Miss Judith stood still and looked at me in bewildered surprise. "What could the Queen mean by that?" she inquired.

"I will tell you," I answered, as we sauntered along side by side under the spreading trees. "Her Majesty imagines herself to have discovered that the doctrines of the Gospel no longer satisfy your heart, and that you have a leaning towards the old Popish creed; not that I believe this for a moment. She took it into her head that I ought to

ask you about this, and warn you of the peril to which you would expose your soul's salvation, for she credited me with possessing some influence over you, my dear young lady."

Miss Judith walked a few steps without speaking, then she responded: "What if it really were so? What if my heart and my reason alike revolted from the vague, often contradictory teaching of the Reformers? Supposing I really did feel drawn to the ancient faith our forefathers held, what would the Queen have you say to me then?"

I was not a little alarmed at this speech, and hastened to reply: "Of my own accord I should make every endeavour to expose the snares of the devil, the fallacious arguments, that is, wherewith he who was a liar from the beginning seeks to entrap simple souls and draw them into error. I should beg you on my knees to think of the interests of your soul, and also of the temporal consequences which would result from your apostasy. Furthermore, I should represent to you the grief that such an act on your part would cause to your father, and to all who love and care for you, amongst whom I pray I may be reckoned. Finally, I should warn you, as the Queen authorized me to do, that you would incur her most serious displeasure, and among other serious penalties that of being completely disinherited."

"I am much obliged to you, Mr. St. Barbe, for your frankness in thus warning me of what I might expect from her Majesty, as well as for your own kind, and I am sure, well meant admonitions. As I regard you as a real friend, I too will answer

you in all sincerity. First of all, I know you will admit that no worldly considerations ought to have any weight with me, were I really convinced of the truth of the Catholic religion. The martyrs did not shrink from far worse consequences; they endured the most cruel tortures and death itself rather than abjure the true faith or remain in what they knew to be error. Therefore no fear of temporal disadvantages, hard as I might find them to bear, ought to deter me from searching after the truth; for resistance to the known truth would be the sin against the Holy Ghost, wherewith St. Stephen reproached the Jewish Sanhedrim. You allow that, do you not?"

I was compelled to own that I did.

"Very well," Miss Cecil continued, "then let there be no more mention between us of the consequences, as I am well aware of them. The question to be decided is whether the old or the new religion is the Church founded by Jesus Christ. On this point I confess my mind is not at rest. But the more I think it over, the more I pray about it, the less can I believe in the Church established by Parliament and our Queen." She then with her keen, quick intelligence sketched the origin of the Anglican Church under Henry VIII., and its history up to that day, emphasizing the cause which induced Elizabeth's father to separate from the universal Church, and Elizabeth herself to repudiate that same Church to which she had belonged under Mary, the Catholic. In Henry's case it was the desire for a woman whom later on he caused to be beheaded for adultery; in Elizabeth's the desire

to have the legitimacy of her birth and her right to the throne publicly acknowledged. Since that time Parliament made some change almost every year in religion, and the people were taught the most contradictory tenets.

In answer to this I urged that the fault rested with the Church of Rome which had overlaid the truth of Jesus Christ with so many human inventions, that it was a task of some time for enlightened men to purge away the dross from the pure gold of the Gospel.

She replied that the most incomprehensible thing of all to her was that at any time in Christendom the teaching of Jesus Christ should have been falsified in any essential point. She asked me, did I not believe that Jesus Christ was true God, omniscient, omnipotent and all-wise?

"Most assuredly." I replied, "and I would lay down my life for it."

"Well then," she went on, "what did this all-wise, this almighty, this true God say when He sent out His apostles, commanding them to proclaim His doctrines? You know the passage at the close of St. Mathew's gospel: 'All power is given to me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, teach ye all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you; And behold, *I am with you all days*, even to the consummation of the world!' What does that mean, if not that I, the Lord of Heaven and of Earth, promise that my divine assistance shall never be wanting to you and to your

successors in teaching the truths I brought down from Heaven, and in dispensing the means of grace? In St. Mark's gospel he adds these words: 'He that believeth not shall be condemned'; and in another place, He promises Peter that the gates of hell shall not prevail against His Church. I ask you now how this can be explained, if those who as the successors of Jesus Christ are invested with authority to teach, have for at least the last thousand years deceived the whole of Christendom on the most important points; leading them into fatal errors and degrading idolatry; as for instance, concerning the holy mass, and the real presence of our Lord in the most holy sacrament of the altar? How, were this the case, could it be true that this Divine Teacher is with His Church all days? Can it be supposed that he would compel mankind to accept a lie under pain of eternal damnation? Or have the gates of hell for the last thousand years prevailed against the teaching of Christ? No, Mr. St. Barbe, I see no other alternative than, either to acknowledge that the Ancient Church has on no essential article of faith departed from the truth — and if so, I must receive her doctrines—or, to assert that she has departed from the truth, and then the word of Christ and His solemn assurance are proved worthless. In other words, Jesus Christ is not true God, He is deceived or a deceiver, and if we say this, the whole fabric of Christianity crumbles at a touch. I beg and implore you to help me out of this terrible alternative, for I can perceive no third course to adopt.''

If the truth be told, I too saw no way out

of the difficulty, but I would not own this to myself, much less to my companion. I therefore began to speak vaguely about the fallacy of such reasoning, and said it might as well be alleged that no individual teacher could ever err, a thing obviously untrue. She shook her head at this objection, and rejoined that Christ did not promise to preserve every individual teacher who should be commissioned to teach his Church from falling into error, but He had said: I will be with you; that is, the Church herself should be an infallible and unfailing teacher of truth. Thereupon I spoke of the bad lives of some of the Popes, who nevertheless were regarded as infallible in matters of doctrine, and asked, how did that coincide with the promise that Christ would be ever-present in the Church? She replied that it was not said that the apostles and their successors should be without sin, but that the doctrine should be preserved from corruption. And for the matter of that, I need not speak of the Popes' failings: the innovators of the present day were no saints, witness Henry VIII., and—but no she would not say a word against her Majesty, although her Court was not one where a virtuous maiden found it pleasant to live. — I then found a subterfuge by saying that our Lord's words might be interpreted as referring to the invisible Church of elect souls, taught by the inspirations of the Holy Spirit and by reading the Scriptures. —She asked me, did I really believe that? Had not all pious and god-fearing people both in the Eastern and the Western Church for a thousand

years and more, on the authority of the word of God as expounded by the Church, worshipped God under the sacramental veil of the Host? Or were a handful of apostates like the Waldenses and other heretics the only souls whom the Holy Spirit vouchsafed to enlighten? To speak only of this doctrine of the presence of Christ in the holy Eucharist, could I fail to see how indispensable it was to believe that our Lord would preserve the Church from error on that point? When at the Last Supper He uttered the words: "This is my Body," did He not in His divine prescience clearly foresee that the whole Church in all ages up to our day would understand them in their literal sense? And were they not intended to be so understood did He not foresee that they would give rise to idolatrous worship? To permit such a thing as that could hardly be reconciled with our idea of His Godhead. And even granting that the Church was in error concerning this fundamental dogma and chief article of faith, pray which of the hundred conflicting theories promulgated by the Reformers, each one of whom professes to be enlightened by the Holy Spirit, may be taken as the correct one?

I was for speaking about confession, indulgences, purgatory and the like, but Miss Cecil would not let me shirk the great difficulty. She returned to the main question at issue: Either the Church as a divinely appointed Teacher has never erred on any essential point, or Christ is not the omniscient God, faithful to His promises, whom we are taught to adore.

Finding myself unable to answer these argu-

ments, I got a little out of temper, and spoke rather sharply to my companion, bidding her take heed, lest it should be pride that brought her in danger of losing her faith. Did she consider herself wiser and more clear sighted than all the excellent and enlightened divines both in England and on the continent who were unanimous in asserting the Papacy to be the handiwork of the devil? Then the tears came into Miss Judith's eyes, and she gently answered that she too had feared the same thing; but she could only humbly pray God to enlighten her. To whom could she go for counsel? Not to the Anglican clergy, as it was impossible to feel any respect for men who altered their doctrines at the pleasure of Queen and Parliament. To her father! Unhappily she was only too well persuaded that as he had already changed his creed from political motives, he would not hesitate to do the same again if policy so dictated. She could only look to God, and to her own conscience in this perplexing struggle. If I could render her any assistance, she would be eternally grateful to me.

This was said in so simple, straightforward a manner, that I felt heartily ashamed of having reproached her with pride. Moreover the doubts she had expressed had awakened so loud an echo in my own mind, that I was at a loss what to answer. It was a relief to me that we reached the tent at that moment, and looking for the missing kerchief put a temporary stop to our conversation. It was found at the back of the chair upon which the Queen sat to watch the games, and we started on our walk back to the palace without delay.

I was the first to begin the conversation again, by entreating her not to be hasty in deciding on so important a matter. I would give more thought to the difficulties she propounded; I would read books on the subject and consult some learned divines. Meanwhile we must both be earnest in prayer for light from on high; it was quite possible that the Catholic Church was the true Church of Christ. She thanked me, and promised to do nothing rashly; as yet she was far from seeing her way clear on many points. She begged me not to allow her mother or the Queen to know anything about her difficulties for the present; to this I readily assented. Then it suddenly occurred to me to ask, whether these dreadful doubts had suggested themselves to her mind, or whether some meddlesome Papist had done the mischief.

"The principal difficulty that I mentioned to you," she answered, "has staggered me for a long time, but not until quite recently has it clamoured for solution. It is ever since I read a little book, I dare say you know it, for it has been much talked of for the last four years, I mean this one." So saying she drew from her pocket a pamphlet, which she handed to me. I looked at the title, and exclaimed, "What! the *Rationes decem* of Campion, the Jesuit! Now I see it all. Those serpents have instilled their poison into you!"

"I am perfectly aware, Mr. St. Barbe," Miss Cecil calmly responded in answer to my angry outburst, "that our preachers hate the Jesuits, and say all manner of evil against them, for they regard them as their deadliest enemies. In all my life I

have never seen one of them, except this very Campion, the writer of this little book, and of him I never can think without emotion. He was brought as a prisoner to London, three weeks after it was published, and taken to the Tower gagged and bound, on horseback. It was market-day; I was standing in Cheapside, near the cross, and I saw how his countenance beamed with holy joy while the populace surged around; I saw how reverently he saluted the cross. A few days later, the Queen expressed a desire to see the noted Jesuit; I was one of the few persons selected to accompany her to the house of the Earl of Leicester, where the interview was to be held privately. How Leicester, Bedford, and the Queen herself were all deeply touched by the calm, modest demeanour of the young man, just entering upon the prime of life, thus brought face to face with death in its most terrible form. The Queen made him most brilliant offers, promising him the highest dignities, the richest benefices, if he would renounce his allegiance to the Pope. He declined them all, but so gently, that it was impossible for her to be angry, and we all expected his pardon would follow. Far from this, on the very next day he was placed by her orders on the rack, and so cruelly tortured that he could not raise his hand in the presence of the Judge. And then, in the terrible condition to which he was reduced, no remedies having been given to him, he had to appear in public disputation against our most learned and able theologians, concerning the contents of this very book. He silenced his opponents so com-

pletely, I heard my father say, that all further disputations were prohibited. After that a most scandalous trial took place; it is enough to read the official report, though in that a great deal is suppressed. Last of all he was executed at Tyburn, forgiving his enemies, praying for the Queen, like the holy martyrs of old. Such was the maligned Jesuit, the author of this little book! Now I ask you as a favour to read his *Rationes decem*, his ten arguments in defence of the Papacy, for which he, and many of our best and noblest fellow countrymen —witness Sir Thomas More—have laid down their lives. But first of all try to lay aside your prejudices against the name of Jesuit, so far as to give the reasons he adduces your deliberate and impartial consideration."

This I promised to do, and put the pamphlet, which I had long been desirous of possessing, into my pocket. Yet I went on railing against the Jesuits and repeating the slanders that I had heard or read about them. At length Miss Cecil begged me to leave off, and think what a lovely evening it was. The crimson glow of sunset had faded from the sky, and the moon had risen; a light breeze whispered in the tree tops, and ever and anon the sound of the flowing river fell on our ear. But fair and tranquil as was the face of nature, I was not in a mood to enjoy the beauty of the scene, my mind was too much agitated to feel its charm. Miss Cecil walked in silence by my side for a considerable distance. When I looked at her refined and aristocratic features, the turmoil within my breast rose higher. Was this adorable creature to become

a Papist? My whole being rose against the thought, and I resolved to spare no effort in order to snatch his prey, as I said to myself, from the evil one. As we approached the palace, I spoke to her on the subject, imploring her with passionate earnestness, not to listen to the seducer, but for God's sake to think of the consequences a change of religion would involve.

"'The consequences?'" she repeated. "'Which consequences, the temporal or the eternal? And pray whom do you mean by the seducer? There is but one question to be answered: what is the truth taught by Jesus Christ? And when one is satisfied on that point, there only remains to act in accordance with the words: 'What doth it profit a man, if he gain the whole world, and suffer the loss of his own soul?'"

CHAPTER XVII.

St. Barbe relates how he endeavoured to set his mind at rest, and how it came to pass that he made Babington's acquaintance.

When Miss Cecil and I reached the palace, we found a page waiting to conduct us to the Queen's presence. We handed over the kerchief; the Queen at once sent away my companion, and inquired whether I had confessed the fair Judith, and what was the result? I replied that her Majesty's penetration had not been at fault; there were, it was true, some clouds of doubt which disturbed the serenity of Miss Cecil's faith, but I trusted they might be dispersed before they threatened a storm. She desired me to be more explicit. Fortunately for me at that moment the Earl of Essex was announced, and I was dismissed, the Queen saying that I must at some other time tell her more about my penitent's state of mind. I answered that the seal of confession must not be broken; she laughed, and gave me a playful tap of the shoulder as I withdrew, a sign that I was in great favour.

That night I could not sleep. After tossing on my bed till midnight was past, my mind dwelling continually on the objections Miss Cecil had stated, I rose, and lighting a taper, sat down to read the *Rationes decem*. The arguments were so irresistible, couched as they were in pithy latinity, that I could not help reading the book all through. More than once I threw it aside angrily, and paced up and down my chamber to still the agitation it

awakened; but each time I took it up again, and read some more. Campion's reason struck me like so many blows; I could have cried aloud, as with physical pain. The mishandling of Holy Scripture by the Reformers, Luther rejecting the Epistle of St. James, his followers rejecting other books, the Genevans repudiating the Book of Esther, just as the Manichees did St. Mathew's Gospel and the Acts of the Apostles, the Ebionites the Epistles of St. Paul; the wresting of the sacred text by recent expositors for the support of their own opinions, the example cited by Campion, being the words Miss Judith had mentioned. 'This is my Body' to which most contrary meanings were attached; the impossibility that a Church out of whose pale there is no salvation, should be an invisible Church; the Oecumenical Councils, from the first four of which, recognized by Parliament in the first years of Elizabeth's reign, the Jesuit drew proofs of the primacy of Peter; the sacrificial character of the mass, the veneration of the saints, etc.; the authority of the early Fathers and their exposition of the Sacred Scriptures; the testimony of history; the obvious contradictions and false conclusions in the tenets of modern innovations; the fair flowers of Paradise, the hate and rage of hell; the hierarchy on earth, the Church with her missions, her colleges, her canon laws, her clergy, regular and secular; the splendid adornment of her cathedrals, the pious institutions of our forefathers—all these and more besides, that I cannot now recall, burst in upon my soul with tempestuous force, shaking in their foundations those

religious convictions which, imbibed in my childhood, had every year grown with my growth.

My first feeling was one of rage against the writer of a book whose object was to overthrow all that I had hitherto regarded as sacred, and call upon me to venerate what till then had been an abomination to me. It was actually a satisfaction to me to know that the man had met his end at the hangman's hands. But this state of mind could not last long; my own good sense told me that an outburst of anger was no answer to arguments founded on reason, and evidence adduced from Holy Writ and from history. So I took up Campion's pamphlet again, and bent my whole mind on the endeavour to detect the fallacy on which his argument rested, but try as I might, I could discover none, and the dawn of day found me in as much perplexity as ever.

As soon as it was light, I went out into the park, to cool my fevered blood in the fresh morning air. It then occurred to me that a special commission had been appointed by the Queen to answer this Jesuit's pestilential pamphlet. I was in Paris at the time, consequently I had heard nothing of the controversy. I resolved forthwith to return to London; at my uncle's house I should be certain to find the refutation and the protocol of the commission, and then it would doubtless be easy work to draw the poisoned shaft out of my own and Miss Judith's heart. I determined besides, that as soon as this was done, I would ask for the young lady's hand; for the service I should have rendered her would give me a claim to it, and I knew that the Queen approved my suit.

Hastening back to my chamber, I wrote a note to Miss Cecil, telling her that I had read the *Rationes*, and acquainting her with what I intended to do. I begged her to make my excuses to the Queen, and herself to take no step towards Papistry until she had received the report I would give her of my investigations. Having sealed the letter, I gave it to a servant with orders to deliver it at once; and immediately after breakfast I rode away from Richmond, with a far heavier heart, I must confess, than I had brought to it the day before.

While I was waiting at Putney to be ferried across the river, I saw Lady Tregian with her three children. She had taken the Queen at her word, and was actually asking alms for the love of Christ of the passers by. She spoke to me, and embittered as I was against the Papists, I could not help being touched by the humility she showed, and by the sweet innocent face of the little girl with whom I had been so pleased the day before. I slipped a few gold pieces into the child's hand, and told the mother to apply to Walsingham on the same or the following day; I would see if I could get him to do something for her. She thanked me, saying God would reward me, and that her children should pray for me.

I experienced a feeling of relief, as I crossed the river, for a good deed acts as balm upon the wounded spirit. My way led me past Tyburn, where Campion had ended his days on the gallows, while I was still at some distance from it, I noticed a stream of people all going in the same direction as myself. In answer to my inquiries, I was

informed that two Popish priests were to be hanged and quartered for high treason, and I then remembered hearing this casually mentioned at the Court yesterday, as a matter of every day occurrence. I never was a friend to these scenes of horror, but the anger exited by Campion's book still glowed in my breast, and induced me to make an exception for this occasion. So I rode with the crowd to Tyburn, where I arrived just as the two condemned men were taken from the hurdles and placed in the hangman's cart. I managed to get near enough to see them well, and hear all that was said. They were young men; their countenances were pale and grave; but they betrayed none of the fear of death that I should have expected idolatrous priests to feel when summoned to appear before the judgment seat of God. The words they addressed to the people, with the halter already around their necks, bore the stamp of truth. They died for the ancient faith of their forefathers, they said, and were traitors neither to the Queen nor country. Some of the bystanders clamoured for them to be cut down before life was extinct, but I am glad to say the sheriff did not allow this. When at last he gave the order, I rode off, not caring to witness the butchery that ensued.

The heroic and truly Christian manner in which these men met death impressed me deeply. There was no doubt that they were in good faith, confident of the truth of the religion for which they suffered. I tried to persuade myself that they were duped by the Jesuits, at whose door I was fain to lay the death of these innocent persons.

I did not find Walsingham at home; he had gone to some meeting of the Privy Council. But Gray, the head of the Government offices, a small, spare old man, brought me the books I asked for; the writings of Aylner, of Jewel, of learned professors of theology at the universities, altogether a host of volumes bearing on the subject of Campion's *Rationes decem*. The protocol of the commission and the report of the disputation in the Tower, the latter written by his own hand, were also laid before me.

"There is plenty of learning in these big books, sir," the old man said. "Greek and Hebrew too." But there is not a complete and conclusive refutation amongst them all. Any one who wrote that would indeed do good service to the Gospel."

I asked him some particulars about the disputation in the Tower. He shrugged his shoulders and said it had fared ill with Campion. The unfortunate man had been tortured on the rack within an inch of his life, and half starved to boot; yet he maintained his cause, albeit a bad one, so valiantly, that an end had to be put to the debate, as the impression produced on the audience was the reverse of what was desired. Walsingham had foreseen this, and wished a first trial to be made before the Privy Council. But our divines were so certain of victory, that they would have liked to have held it in St. Paul's. True enough they had the better of him as far as voice and elocution went; but whenever a clear, definite answer to his arguments was required of them, they had recourse to declamation and abuse. In a word, it was a

failure; and the commission itself was even worse, for our divines began to fall out among themselves. "Well, Mr. St. Barbe no offence, sir, but I have learnt one lesson from it: Believe what her Majesty the Queen, the true Head of the English Church, and her Parliament propose for your belief, and beware lest you be drawn into controversy on matters of faith with the devil and his agents, the Jesuits, or you will surely get the worst of it. Always barring better understanding and sharper judgment, and herewith, I wish your excellence a very good day."

So saying the dapper little man trotted away. I applied myself diligently to the books and the reports before me; the more I read of them, the more convinced I was of the accuracy of Gray's description of them. So much dry learning, greek and latin quotations, heavy argumentation and inconclusive proofs, interlarded with abuse of the Pope and his followers, at last, tired and fretful, I laid the books aside, and was leaving the house, to get a breath of fresh air, when I met my uncle coming upstairs.

He took me into his cabinet, and made me give him a full account of what had occurred at Richmond. He seemed very well pleased with me. He laughed Miss Cecil's difficulties to scorn, and said they would die a natural death, as soon as she was married, and her idle time filled up with the cares of the nursery and the household. "As soon as this business about Mary Stuart is done with," he said, "I shall myself ask Burghley and her Majesty to give you the young lady's hand.

I have just heard something more about Babington and his companions. One of the barmaids out there at the *Blue Boar*, played the eavesdropper; they seem really in earnest about those plans and mean to attempt the coup. I am afraid my spy was rather imprudent, it will not do to let them suspect that they are watched. You must try to make acquaintance with one or other of them. I have a picture here of Babington and all his crew which Philipps — that fellow can do everything — copied for me. The likenesses may not be very good, but you may know Babington by his costly and fashionable clothes. He is to be seen nearly every evening in the *Paris Garden*, and they have a gayboat on the Thames. You might ask them to instruct you a little concerning Miss Cecil's doubts, and even pretend you wished to become a Papist yourself. Those conspirators seem such silly fellows, you may catch them with birdlime."

At this moment Lady Tregian was announced. I began hurriedly to tell my uncle her story, but he already knew it all. Her husband was an old acquaintance of his. "They are obstinate recusants," he said, but I quite agree with you that they must not be allowed to beg in the streets. She may join her husband in the Clink, if she chooses. She would not be the first lady of noble birth who has voluntarily shared her husband's captivity. The children will easily find a home in the house of some popish gentlefolks. It is wonderful how willing they are to make sacrifices for one another. There are the Bellamys, for instance, at Harrow-on-the-Hill; they have nearly ruined themselves

through paying fines and assisting priests and other Papists."

I slipped out by a side door, in order not to be present at the interview between my uncle and the unfortunate lady. Later on I heard that she gladly accepted the proposal that she should join her husband in prison. The children had been taken in, for a time at least, by Lady Paulet, step-mother to Sir Amias, and as fervent a Catholic, as he was a rabid Puritan. It will readily be imagined that the courage and conjugal devotion displayed by Lady Tregian — I may here remark that her voluntary incarceration lasted for twenty-eight years—added to the heroic death of the two young priests, together with all that I had read in the books, I had been studying, served to strengthen the doubts Miss Cecil had already raised in my mind. However I determined for the present, as far as possible, not to let my thoughts dwell upon theological questions, and to follow Gray's example by laying all the responsibility of my religious tenets at the door of the Queen and Parliament.

The next day I went to the *Paris Garden* and asked if Babington was there. He was not; but he was evidently well known, and I was told he would probably make his appearance before long. To while away the time, I went to the butts, and practised pistol shooting. A man who had been sitting at a table apart, wrapped in his cloak, with a glass of grog before him, followed me, and after looking on for a space in silence, remarked that I did not seem much used to pistol practice, and gave me a few hints. I handed the pistol to him,

and said I must have a proof of his skill before I took him for my master. He replied that an old soldier like himself must be an adept at that business, and three successive times he hit the heart of the Turk, which had been erected as a target. I complimented him on his dexterity, and looked more closely at him; he was a man of average height and muscular built; in walking he dragged one leg slightly, the result as I afterwards heard, of a wound he received at Antwerp. His complexion was pale, but sunburnt; the peculiar expression of his eyes, which were shaded by dark bushy eyebrows, staggered me a little, and made me ask myself whether the man was quite right in his mind. There was however nothing in his demeanor to strengthen this suspicion. When I had finished my number of shots and was about to depart, the stranger came up to me and said had he not heard me inquiring for one Babington? I answered in the affirmative, and asked if he knew him? He replied that was the very question he was going to put to me, giving me at the same time a searching look. I wished to make Babington's acquaintance, I rejoined; and he said he wished to do so too, adding we might perhaps later on become acquainted with one another through Mr. Babington. "Very possibly," I replied, and I told him my name. "St. Barbe," he repeated, "I do not think I heard that one mentioned. All the same my name is Savage, John Savage." Thereupon he bowed and left me. Such was my first introduction to that unhappy individual.

I did not meet with Mr. Babington at either

of his accustomed resorts that day, and no wonder, for, as the reader has already been told, the whole party were at Woxindon, whence they did not return until nightfall. I was however with Walsingham on the following day when Babington and Windsor were announced. Before they were admitted, my uncle concealed me in a closet opening out of his private room, only screened off by a heavy curtain, and bade me carefully note down any disclosures of importance that the visitors might make. I could not quite catch all that was said, but through an opening in the tapestry I was able to observe them at leisure. Of Babington I had a full view. When I looked at the gallant young fellow, attractive in face and figure, in the heyday of youth and prosperity, I felt really sorry for him. The horrible scene at Tyburn rose before my eyes, and I said to myself, "O foolish man, are you aware of the awful risk you run in entering the lists with such a one as Walsingham!"

The conversation that passed between my uncle and the two young men has already been accurately reported by my friend Windsor. When they were gone, I could not help asking my uncle whatever induced him to offer one of the conspirators so responsible a post as that of body physician to the Queen of Scots?

"I had two motives," he replied. "First I wanted to make sure that they really were hatching a plot for the liberation of Mary Stuart; for it is difficult to believe that a harum-scarum young fellow like this Babington can possibly be engaged in a serious conspiracy. However it undoubtedly is

so; Windsor managed to keep his self possession tolerably well when I made the startling proposal, but the other fairly betrayed himself. Then secondly, I wished to make them think themselves secure. It is of the utmost importance to me that they should attempt this enterprise. Mary Stuart's death depends upon it, as I told you when you came back from Paris. And I had reason to think they were beginning to get timid about it. Now this show of trust on my part will put them completely off their guard; we will see that a sharp watch is kept over this Mr. Windsor, who seems more to be dreaded than his friend. The surer they think themselves of success, the surer we are of it. I had the two children released only for the sake of keeping the worthy gentlemen in good humor. You may as well take them to Mr. Windsor's house, and that will afford you an opportunity of making acquaintance with the conspirators. Give a guinea to Topcliffe, and tell him not to be impatient, it will not be long before he has these young men in his toils."

Soon after Topcliffe came, bringing the two juvenile prisoners from Newgate. I remember still the impression that Anne Bellamy, herself little more than a child, and the merry, bright boy with his quaint way of talking made upon me. Nor have I forgotten the explanation he gave of image worship, which brought all the doubts suggested by the *Rationes* back to my mind. I asked myself on what our objections to the Catholic religion were founded, if a mere child, half in play, could so easily demolish one of the principal ones? The

noteworthy occurrences that took place while we were on the river have been duly related by my friend Windsor; nothing therefore remains for me but to let him continue the narrative of the events that followed. I do this all the more willingly, because I should have little to tell concerning my last week in London, except my mental struggles, which would be quite as wearisome to read as they were painful to endure. It was not study that brought me to the light, but the exceedingly great mercy of God, of which I shall speak in the proper place.

One thing I must add: About this time Gifford returned bringing with him a letter from Mary Stuart; thus proving that the means of carrying on a secret correspondence through the good offices of the "honest man" had been successfully arranged.

I must now ask Windsor to take up the thread of the story where he left it and relate what happened subsequently to the memorable boating expedition on the Thames.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Windsor relates how he came to a decision upon a most important question.

When we got back to the house, we found the horses standing before the door ready bridled and saddled. We told Tichbourne in as few words as possible what had occurred, and prepared to mount. Miss Anne rode on a pillion behind Babington, after the fashion of those days, and I took little Frith up before me on my saddle. Just as we were starting, I caught sight of Bill Bell, our boatman, standing by, and I remembered my promise to visit his sick daughter that evening. But he assured me that she was better, and begged me not to delay my journey on her account; so I contented myself with sending a message to my patient, to the effect that she might expect a call from me immediately upon my return, probably on the morrow, and meanwhile she should continue to take the medicine I had left with her. Then we struck into a quick trot, taking the nearest way out of London, for it was getting late, and a powerful magnet attracted me to Woxindon.

The shades of evening were beginning to fall before we reached the *Blue Boar* at St. Giles. We drew up under the oaks, and stopped for a few moments, just to tell our host of our satisfactory interview with Walsingham, and refresh ourselves with the stirrup cup of sparkling cider which he brought out to us. Then onward we went through the meadows—already decked in a deeper shade of

verdure than when we passed that way before — to St. John's Wood, arriving at our destination about the time of sunset. The porter hastened to throw open the gate at our approach; and behold, as we rode through the grounds up to the house, a pleasing sight met my view, for who should be standing between the thick hedges of yew but Miss Mary, shading her eyes from the level rays of the setting sun, eager to see who was coming through the gate. When she discerned her brother and sister, she cried aloud with joy, and came running up to kiss and embrace them; and in the delight of this unexpected meeting many a happy, grateful look was directed to Babington and me, especially when she heard that to our intercession with Walsingham, the release of the two prisoners was due.

We were next conducted into the hall, where the venerable old lady sat in her armchair by the hearth. She was much shaken by the grief and agitation of the last two days; but her pale face flushed, and her eyes beamed with pleasure when her two grandchildren, looking bright and well, entered the hall. She kissed the laughing boy and the blooming girl on their foreheads, and extended to each of us a trembling hand. Her two sons also came in, besides several old retainers of the family, and for a few minutes the hall re-echoed with joyous clamour, as if it were forgotten that the house was a house of mourning, and that a few chambers off, the head of the household lay on his bier, still and silent in his last long sleep.

But when the first congratulations and inquiries were over, and the good grandmother heard

that Frith was to go to Court in the capacity of one of the Queen's pages, her countenance grew grave. "Far rather," she said, "would I see the boy taken to Newgate or the Tower, than sent to Court, where every effort will be made to corrupt his innocence and destroy his faith." To this I could not say nay, for the same thought had occurred to me when Elizabeth expressed her royal will to have him for a page. But what could be done under the circumstances? Every one was aware of the Queen's violent temper; if irritated by opposition, she was quite capable of taking the child from us by force, and we should only gain for ourselves a powerful and unscrupulous enemy. So I told the old lady, and she saw the justice of what I said.

I tried to restore cheerfulness to the family circle by the prospect that it would not be for long. An idea struck me as I was riding down from London, which, if we talked it over, might come to something. It was a plan for bringing about, with the assistance of a man whom I knew well, and who was under some obligation to me, the escape of Mr. Robert Bellamy from the Clink. If it succeeded, he would of course, have to cross seas; in that case it might be arranged for the boy to slip away from Court and accompany his uncle to the continent, where he could be received and educated in a Jesuit College. It would doubtless be necessary to await a favourable opportunity for the execution of such a project, but it was not to be supposed that in a few weeks, or a few months at most, Frith's morals would be hopelessly corrupted, or his faith

undermined. I thought in saying this of our scheme for the liberation of Mary Stuart, which if carried out, would assuredly necessitate my flight to the continent. I told myself that provided Miss Mary accepted the offer of my hand, as I had little reason to doubt she would, I would persuade her to settle in some Catholic town on the Rhine. But all this I took care to keep to myself.

The old lady considered the idea of her son Robert attempting to escape from prison as too venturesome. But Remy was all the more pleased with it on that account; he volunteered his assistance, and declared he too would cross the Channel, since England was now no place for Catholics to live in.

"Then you had better go at once, and take the boy with you," the old lady suggested. But that would have interfered sadly with our plans, it would indeed have rendered them nugatory, and aroused the Queen's displeasure against us. Therefore Babington and I exerted all our influence to induce them to send the boy for a short time to the Court; urging that it was quite possible that the Queen would ere long grant the prisoner's pardon; whereas if the child were sent away at once, she would wreak her anger upon the inmates of Woxindon, or at any rate upon Robert, who was completely at her mercy.

"What is to become of us poor girls, if you are all going abroad?" Anne asked in a pitiful voice. "Are we to be left behind with uncle Barthy and grandmother, unprotected and helpless? What a miserable thing it is to be a woman,

dependent upon the will of another! If I were but a man, I know what I would do!"

Babington was so touched by this outburst of feeling on the part of the young lady, that he declared then and there, she should never want a protector while he lived, and if the estate were confiscated by the Crown, he would be proud to offer her a home. This speech evidently afforded the greatest satisfaction to Anne, more so than to her grandmother, who gave the young man plainly to understand that under existing circumstances she considered such gallanteries ill-timed. I was glad that I had kept silence, and contented myself with exchanging with Anne's sister a glance, of which the blush that mantled her cheek showed that she comprehended the significance.

After a lengthened discussion it was decided that Frith should go to Court; but before giving a final consent, the old lady wished to ask the opinion of Father Weston, who was still in hiding in the old Castle. One of the servants had already been sent to conduct the priest with all precautions, to the house; for it was thought that without too great risk he might say mass before daybreak in the chamber where the corpse lay, and recite the prayers for the departed.

Frith, who could no longer keep his eyes open, was sent off to bed; Mrs. Bellamy and the two girls also retired, leaving Babington and myself, with the two brothers of the deceased, to await the coming of the priest. We occupied ourselves in reciting the Psalter of Jesus for the suffering souls, uncle Barthy taking the lead with great

devotion; we had almost got to the end when Father Weston entered. He would not allow us to break off, but joined us in the last sentences, and the Ave and *Requiescat* wherewith we concluded. Then he seated himself at the table and partook of a slight refreshment, conversing meanwhile very agreeably with us. I need hardly say that he listened with the greatest interest to the adventures of the children, and our interview with the Queen. His eyes sparkled with pleasure when we told him how Frith had distinguished himself as a controversialist; but on hearing of Elizabeth's command, he looked very grave. He would not give a definite answer, when we asked his opinion concerning the plan we had formed, saying he must have time to think over a matter which so closely affected the child's spiritual welfare, and seek light from God in the holy sacrifice of the mass. He asked however at once, whether we had not thought of sending the boy abroad directly as the simplest way out of the difficulty, and the answer Babington gave, did not seem to satisfy him. He looked searchingly at the speaker; then rising up he asked leave to retire, that he might prepare himself for saying mass. Though he was but young, I felt from the outset perfect confidence in the good Father, his manner was so quiet and unassuming, so simple and straightforward, I determined to go to confession to him, and ask what he thought about my acceptance of Walsingham's proposal.

Having obtained permission to go to his room as soon as I was ready, I withdrew from the others in order to examine my conscience. This done, I

presented myself before the priest, and made a humble and contrite confession of my sins and shortcomings, which were alas! not few in number; when he had set me my penance, and was about to pronounce the absolution, I told him I wished under the seal of confession, to ask his advice about an affair of importance. Then, without mentioning any names, I disclosed our project to him, and acquainted him with the offer Walsingham had made to give me the post of physician to the Queen of Scots. He kept silence for some time, then he questioned me concerning our design, the means whereby we proposed to execute it, and particularly about the qualifications of the persons who had pledged themselves to this undertaking. When I told him there were six young men of good family, ardent Catholics, about my own age, he sighed, and again for a while said nothing. I thought he was seeking to know the will of God in this matter. Presently I broke the silence by inquiring whether he did not think our enterprise permissible? To me and to my friends it appeared chivalrous and meritorious in a high degree. He replied that in itself the release of an innocent person from unjust imprisonment, provided no unlawful means were employed, was certainly a ligitimate and laudable action, and this principle held good in the case of Mary Stuart, whose captivity for eighteen years on account of her faith was an open violation of justice. But even a good deed may become wrong, if it could be foreseen that it would be attended with disastrous consequences, for prudence was one of the Cardinal virtues. And in

the event of the attempt proving abortive, I must be aware that the results would be fatal not only to those who had taken part in it, but to the captive herself; nay, to all the Catholics of England, who already groaned under a cruel persecution. And what I told him of the youth of the conspirators augured ill for the success of their project. But what caused him the most apprehension was the attitude Walsingham had assumed; there was no doubt he had got wind of the plot, and the wily statesman thought to throw us off our guard by his friendly advances, in order when the right moment came, to crush the whole concern with one blow, and the Queen of Scots perchance with it. He begged us for God's sake to have nothing to do with a man who was so infinitely superior to us in cunning. I then explained that I had sworn to stand by my friends in their attempt to deliver Mary Stuart, and unless he authoritatively assured me that it was sinful, I should not depart from my word. Moreover, I thought the plan would succeed; we had agreed to ask the consent of the prisoner herself, so that she would be prepared like ourselves, to bear the consequences of possible failure. And in speaking of the evil results that might be anticipated, one must not forget the good results that would follow upon the release of the Queen; and considering the flagrant injustice of keeping her captive, one might reckon on the help of God in so good a cause.

When the good Father saw that my mind was made up, and that I was fully convinced of the lawfulness of our enterprise, he no longer dissuaded

me from it, but only asked whether any attempt on Elizabeth's life was connected with it? He was evidently relieved by the emphatic denial I gave. I then asked him what he thought about my acceptance of the post Walsingham offered me, for that was the point on which I was most anxious for his advice. He replied that it was quite evident, that such an extraordinary proposal on Walsingham's part was a trap of some kind, but what his particular design was, was not so equally apparent. Perhaps her enemies meant to administer poison to the prisoner, and the appointment of a Catholic physician was intended as a blind. He had heard on good authority that hints of her assassination had been given to Sir Amias Paulet, but he, despite his hatred of Catholics, had repudiated them indignantly. On the other hand it was obvious that my presence at Chartley, even for a few hours, would greatly facilitate the execution of our project. He must leave the decision to me, only imploring me to be continually on my guard, and bear in mind with how artful and determined a man I had to deal. If I embarked in this perilous undertaking, it was doubly imperative upon me to keep my conscience clean, as I might be called at any moment to appear before the judgment seat of God. I must be prepared for a violent death, and so must my friends. Then in a touching exhortation, he pointed out to me that it was not by means of political plots and intrigues, but by prayer and suffering, yea, by the blood of her martyrs, that the Church must hope to prevail in England. And when he had awakened me to contrition and repentance for all the sins of my past life, he gave me absolution.

It was about two in the morning, when we all assembled in the upper chamber where Richard Bellamy had died, and where he was laid out. The windows were carefully curtained, lest a ray of light might betray us; trusty servants were stationed at the doors and on the staircase, lest the pursuivants should again surprise us. The priest said a requiem mass; the old lady, uncle Barthy, Miss Mary and myself, received Holy Communion. Afterwards Father Weston recited the *Libera*, sprinkled the coffin with holy water, scattering in it a handful of consecrated earth, in order that the departed might not be entirely deprived of the ceremonial of the Church. The duty of interring his mortal remains in the family vault in the desecrated churchyard must be left to the Protestant minister. A few words of consolation and admonition were addressed to us by Father Weston; then he unvested, and cautiously concealed the sacred vessels in a hiding place constructed in the wall; we meanwhile said the rosary for the soul of the departed

After breakfast, Father Weston took little Frith with him into the room where I had made my confession the night before, and kept him there some time. On his return, he said it was much to be wished that the child should leave the country at once, but as this might bring us into trouble, he would not oppose his going to Court for a short period, trusting that he would be preserved from harm. He had told him what he must do and whither he must fly if sorely pressed by temptation. Thus the question was settled.

In the afternoon of the same day I rode back to London with Babington, and on the way told him what Father Weston had been saying to me. He made very light of it, and said not long before he had consulted the Jesuit about the same thing, and received a similar answer. These learned theologians were not capable of any daring stroke, such as alone would be of avail at the present juncture; let it once be carried out and crowned with success, they would be ready enough to give it their approval. In general, Babington had not a good word to say of Father Weston, because, as I afterwards learnt, he had advised him to put all thought of the enterprise out of his mind, telling him to his face that he was not the man to conduct it, and he did not see in what manner he could ever escape out of Walsingham's snares [1]). I also discussed the matter with Tichbourne; he too inclined to the Jesuit's opinion. For one more day I postponed the decision, then, weary of the continual pro and con, I made my choice.

"The die is cast!" I said to Tichbourne. "I am going to-day to Walsingham to accept Chartley."

"May you never repent it!" he answered, and gave me some counsel, as to how I was to keep behind Walsingham. They were of little or no use. The Secretary of State seemed glad to hear my decision, which was evidently what he expected, and said some kind things about my brother, Lord Windsor, who, he hoped, would consider my appointment to this post as a service done to himself. He asked when I thought of going to Chartley, and

[1]) Life of Father Weston, p. 185. seq.

I replied it was for him to determine that. Then he fixed the Monday after *Cantate* Sunday, and said if I had no objection, his nephew St. Barbe would accompany me, as he had some messages to carry to the Queen and to Sir Amias. But before that we must both go to Court, and take thither the funny little fellow, who had lately made acquaintance with her Majesty in so unceremonious a manner. A fortunate child is that, he said, to have found favour with the Queen at so early an age; the highest honours and dignities will be within his grasp. Thereupon he took leave of me as kindly as at the close of our first interview, so that I said to myself Father Weston had perhaps been somewhat hasty in his judgment of the man's intentions. Nor did his sending his nephew with me awaken any suspicions, for I thought from the first that he appeared an honorable sort of man.

When I left Walsingham, I took my way homeward through St. Catharine's Docks, for the purpose of paying Bill Bell's daughter a visit. I found her much better, wonderfully better, so much so that I would have backed her to live through the summer. This seemed to me an indication of Providence that I did well to go to Chartley, so ready are we to see the finger of God, when it points in the same direction as our own wishes.

CHAPTER XIX.

The reader hears of a happy betrothal and of another less fortunate courtship.

The next few days were wet and cheerless, days whereby April is wont to check the too rapid advance of Spring. By me they were spent in making preparations and concerting our plans of action; for I had determined to give my friends advice immediately, should I find the royal captive willing to make her escape, as soon as a favourable opportunity for the attempt presented itself. Salisbury and Barnewell forthwith set out on the way to Lancashire, for the purpose of gaining a knowledge of the route, bespeaking a relay of horses, and making terms with the skipper of a fishing smack, who would transport the fugitives to Normandy. Babington was to leave London the same day that I did. He was going to his estate at Dethick, in the neighbourhood of Chartley, to make the necessary arrangements, but not by the direct road, for fear of awakening suspicion.

Now it happened that on the Saturday before *Jubilate* Sunday the weather changed, and nature once more rejoiced in the bright Spring sunshine. I rode to Woxindon in the afternoon. The hope of hearing a Sunday mass there was sufficient excuse for my reappearance, after so short an interval; besides I had promised to fetch Frith on the following Monday, as we were to take him to Richmond to be presented to the Queen on Tuesday. I had also made up my mind to profit by the first

suitable occasion to plead my cause with the young lady whose charms, as I could no longer conceal from myself, had completely enslaved my heart and my fancy.

As I rode slowly through St. John's Wood, I noted the change that the last few days had effected. The tender green of the beeches had burst through the brown sheaths, and the young leaves glistened in the sunlight, while a light wind gently shook to the ground the pearly drops left by the recent rain. Even the oaks, always later in coming into leaf, showed signs of awakening life. The birds warbled and twittered as they flitted among the branches, already intent on the business of nest-building. In a sunny, sheltered spot, the first wild flowers of the year caught my eye; I dismounted and gathered as great a variety as I could find of these fair Spring blossoms: golden cowslips, fragile wood-anemones, blue-bells and stellaria, pale primroses and deliciously scented violets nestling under the protecting leaves. These I carefully arranged and bound together with some stalks of long grass so as to form a simple and elegant nosegay.

I was riding onward with it in my hand, when suddenly I was startled out of my reverie by a joyous shout. It was Frith's voice; the little fellow came running to meet me. And who did I see somewhat further on, sitting under the beech tree, but his sister Mary, a quantity of flowers by her side, which she was dexterously weaving into a wreath.

I sprang from the saddle and went up to her.

She shook hands with me in a very cordial manner, and explained that the garland she was making was to be hung on the cross, which had been put up in the garden, near her mother's grave under the great oak, to her father's memory. "But I see," she added, "you too have been gathering flowers. How tastefully they are arranged!"

"Do you like the little posy, Miss Bellamy?" I answered. "I meant it for you when I made it up, if you will do me the honour to accept it, as a token of the great esteem and affection I feel for you."

She looked up at me with a heightened colour. Then to my vexation she called to her brother, who was running off in search of more flowers: "Stop here, Frith, we have plenty of flowers; we will go home directly with Mr. Windsor." It was evident that she wished to avoid being alone with me, whereas that was exactly what I was wishing for. Was it maidenly modesty that prompted her, or did she wish to prevent a declaration on my part? At any rate I was resolved to speak and make her listen to me. Again I asked her if she would accept my nosegay? She replied: "Oh certainly!" The sweet flowers could be put with the others in the wreath she was making. But perceiving that this was not what I wanted, she said with some embarrassment of manner, it was a pity to pull to pieces a bunch so prettily arranged, might she take it home for her grandmother? I said yes, provided she would at the same time tell her grandmother something that I had to say to her presently. She gave me a questioning look out of her blue eyes,

and went on silently and busily with her work, Frith handing her the leaves and blossoms as she required them.

The wreath was soon finished and we got up to go. I lifted Frith into the saddle and put the reins into his hand, for my horse was so gentle, I knew he could be trusted with him. At first the boy rode along the narrow path at a foot's pace, in accordance with the injunctions of his sister, who followed with me. But as I had anticipated, this was too slow a mode of procedure for the active little fellow, who contrived with hand and foot to urge his steed into a trot, so that he was soon some distance ahead of us, for all Miss Mary might do or say.

I was not going to let slip the opportunity that thus presented itself, and with a beating heart I craved my companion's indulgence, begging her to listen to me for a few moments. She dropped her eyes with a conscious look, and began toying with my posy which she was carrying. But when I tried to deliver the speech that I had prepared, I could not bring out a single sentence, although I am not generally at a loss for words. I stammered out a kind of apology, saying I was well aware that the present moment, when her father was only just laid in his grave, was no fitting time to speak on such a subject, but it was a question of now or never, as I was on the eve of leaving London for a long period, and perhaps should shortly quit the country for good and all. I was much gratified to perceive how startled Miss Mary was at this intelligence,

for it showed me that I had been right in believing that she was not indifferent to me. Thus encouraged, without further preamble, I asked her could she love me a little, and might I cherish the hope, that when I was in a position to offer her a home, I might claim her for my bride?

She changed colour, and two large tears rolled slowly down her cheeks, as she timidly answered: "Perhaps I ought not to reply to such a question in this season of bereavement, but if I am to ask my own heart, it will not say nay."

At these words heaven seemed open to me, and in my delight I wanted to take her in my arms. But this she would not allow; indeed she said perhaps she had already said too much, for she must make the stipulation that the consent of her grandmother, who stood to her in the position of a mother, should be asked; and until it was obtained there should be no more talk of love between us. To this I was obliged to agree; and little more was said until we reached the garden gate, where Frith, who had already taken my horse round to the stables, met us with the garland. We took it from him, and together went to hang it on the cross under the great oak.

Shortly after I repaired to the house, and asked to see Mrs. Bellamy. I found her at needlework in a small, built-out room; she received me very kindly, and asked me to sit down. After the exchange of the usual civilities, I summoned up courage, seeing my nosegay in a glass on the table, to ask whether Miss Mary had delivered a message

from me when she brought the flowers. The old lady laid down her work, and said her granddaughter told her that I had a word to say to her. Thereupon I opened my heart to her. She replied that as I remarked, within a week of her son's funeral, one would hardly choose to speak of love and marriage; but the exceptional circumstances under which we lived in England must be our excuse. "I tell you quite openly," she said, "that I have personally not a word to say against you. Our acquaintance is not one of long standing, but the events under which it was made, and all that has since occurred, have given me an insight into your character, showing you to be a staunch adherent of the Catholic faith, and possessed of all the qualities of heart and mind which I should wish to see in the husband I should choose for Mary. Since therefore you tell me, what indeed I have already found out for myself, that she loves you well enough to join her lot to yours, I will gladly consent to your union, as soon as you can provide her with a comfortable, though not a luxurious home."

I kissed the hand of the venerable dame, thanking her for her kind expressions in my regard, though I must acknowledge that in the goodness of her heart she much overrated my gifts and qualities. I stated it to be my determination to wait until my future was fully secured, before making Miss Mary a formal offer of marriage. Then I spoke of my project of settling abroad, on account of the difficulties that beset Catholics in the practice of their religion in England, difficulties that every year became greater. I said I had deposited

a considerable sum of money with a merchant in Cologne, and if later on matters took a turn for the better in our country, as I confidently believed they would, there would always be the small estate I had inherited from my mother in Cornwall to which to return. I asked if she would be prepared to take up her abode with us on the Rhine? She smiled sadly and shook her head, saying she was too old a tree to be transplanted, and she hoped her last resting place would be on English soil. Yet she approved of my plan.

We then spoke of the more immediate future. I told her that in a week's time I was going to Chartley as body physician to the Queen of Scots, at which she was very much astonished, instantly inquiring how I had obtained the post. She also put a great many other questions to me; I did not give her a hint of our plot, for I was sworn to secrecy; but she suspected the truth, and warned me against Babington, and any foolhardy schemes he might devise on behalf of the captive Queen. She also warned me against trusting Walsingham, in almost the same words Father Weston had employed. I promised to be very guarded in pledging myself to any design of which my conscience did not approve. Finally she said she would speak to her granddaughter, and give me a decided, she hoped a favourable answer, before my departure from Woxindon.

I thanked her, and was about to leave the room, when my little friend Frith came running in, to say that Babington had arrived, and had brought him a beautiful new velvet cap with a heron's

feather. I then remembered that the host of the *Blue Boar* told me when I stopped there on my way out, that Babington had been there only a few hours before. Thinking of other things I had forgotten all about it, and did not in the least expect to meet him at Woxindon. The reason of his coming was to be explained later on.

Before supper time, I went into the garden, to take a few turns upon the terrace, to enjoy the soft air and watch the setting sun. Just as I got out I saw Miss Anne coming from the outbuildings, very much heated, as if she had been walking quickly. She started on seeing me, and appeared at first as if she wished to avoid me; but the next minute she advanced to meet me with a pleasant greeting, while she stroked from her brow her somewhat disorderly hair. She had been for a ramble in the wood, she said, and had climbed up on to the old tower. There was a beautiful view from thence, would I like to accompany her thither, to see the sunset? We should just have time before supper.

I willingly assented, and she guided me through the copse, already out in full leaf, to the old castle. We clambered over the ruined walls, covered with moss and all manner of plants, until we reached the foot of the principal tower, whose massive stone walls, notwithstanding various cliffs and fissures, still bid defiance to wind and storm. I could perceive no means of gaining access to the tower, the doors of which were, as is frequently the case, at a considerable height from the ground, only to be reached from one of the adjacent buildings by means of a drawbridge. The place where

this had been was plainly discernible, amid the ivy that clothed the ancient edifice. My companion solved the difficulty by leading the way through a thicket to another side of the tower, where one could climb to a considerable height on one of the outer walls of the castle, and thus reach a loophole, the sides of which had crumbled away, and which was almost concealed by a curtain of ivy. Thus we gained ingress to the interior; beneath our feet lay a vaulted chamber, Father Weston's hiding place, as I afterwards learnt, while a spiral staircase, in a state of tolerable preservation, constructed in the masonry of the tower, conducted to the platform of a projecting turret.

When we reached the summit we let our gaze wander over the fair landscape spread out before us like a panorama, beautified by the golden rays of the setting sun. Anne told me the names of the different villages that lay on the banks of the Thames, and on the far reaching plains of Middlesex. Then we stood for some time without speaking, contemplating the peaceful scene, no sound disturbing the silence except the shrill cries of the swallows as they whirled in wide circles round the tower.

When the sun disappeared below the horizon, and the distance grew hazy, Miss Anne warned me that it was time to return. As I reluctantly moved away, after a last lingering look, my eye fell upon a little pocket-book, elegantly bound in parchment, that lay upon the stone parapet. I immediately recognized it as belonging to Babington; I had frequently seen it in his possession, besides, it bore his initials stamped in gilt on the cover.

"Why, this is Babington's pocket-book! However came it here?" I exclaimed, as I took it in my hand.

At these words Miss Anne, who had already reached the stair steps, turned back with a hasty ejaculation, and snatched it from me. Then, aware that she had betrayed herself, she coloured violently, saying: "For God's sake, dear Mr. Windsor, do not let my grandmother or my sister know of this!"

I felt for the poor girl's confusion, and as I did not doubt that Babington's intentions were honourable, I did not feel called to play the preacher or act the informer. However, I was not a little annoyed with him for having persuaded the innocent, but rather giddy child to meet him clandestinely at the old tower, and I begged Miss Anne to be guilty of no such imprudences in future, since she knew how much her relatives would object to them. She was very penitent, and entreated me not to reveal her secret, but as I was Babington's friend, she did not mind telling me that she had secretly engaged herself to him before her father's death. Her grandmother was so terribly prejudiced against Babington, that she would never consent to their betrothal; yet they suited one another so well, and Babington was such a dear, pleasant fellow, she would never give him up. If I would only keep my own counsel, and not say a syllable to anyone, she would help me in my courtship of her sister, for she had seen very plainly that I was in love with Mary.

Thus she ran on while we wended our way homewards, and I gave her to understand that all

was pretty well arranged between her sister and myself, and her grandmother approved of the match. She looked very much surprised, and said what a hypocrite Mary was, for she had told her nothing about it; and when I turned the tables on her, by asking if she had confided anything about the view from the tower to her sister, she said the case was different, as in this instance concealment was necessary, on account of the unreasonable dislike her grandmother had for Babington.

We got back just in time for supper. Nothing noteworthy happened till after morning prayers on the following day. Uncle Barthy acted as chaplain, for Father Weston had gone on a mission to the midland counties.

I was walking in the garden, chatting with Frith, when I heard a horse led round from the stables, and wondering who could be going out riding on Sunday morning, I went round to the front door. To my surprise I found it was Babington. He was evidently in a state of great irritation; when he saw me, he shook his riding-whip at me angrily, exclaiming: "You tell-tale, you old tell-tale!" Then he struck his mare so violently that she reared and nearly threw him. I called to him to stop and tell me what was the matter; but he was off like a shot and soon out of sight in the forest. A few moments later I encountered Miss Anne, in tears and much agitated. She taxed me with my treachery; this explained the mystery. The old lady had been told of the meetings in the old tower, and had taken Babington to task about it; and finding he made light of her reprimand,

had forthwith forbidden him the house. I was suspected of having been the mischief-maker.

I could not help feeling much annoyed, for my friendly relations with Babington were not merely disturbed, but permanently destroyed by this untoward incident. Even when at a later period he discovered that the old serving-man John, had carried the information to his mistress, he held aloof from me still, and thus I lost all opportunity I might have had of influencing him for good.

But my vexation was almost wholly forgotten in the happiness that awaited me that same Sunday. In the afternoon I was called up into the upper chamber, that I knew so well. There I found the venerable dame, and my dear Mary. The former called my attention to the wonderful flower; I had often looked at it before, now it was fully developed, and all the fine rosy blossoms were unfolded. I had never in all my life seen the like of it, nor could I conceive how the plant could possibly draw sap and moisture out of the dry cement in which its roots were fixed. When I made this remark to the old lady, she replied that she regarded the wonderful growth of this plant as a special mark of divine favour, and on that account it was to her a source of continual consolation. For although in itself it was a natural flower, it could not have sprouted and grown in such a place without supernatural interference. That was why she had asked me to come up thither; she wished that beneath God's little flower, as she called it, Mary and I should pledge our troth, and seal our engagement with a kiss. For although a

public engagement was not to be thought of in consequence of their recent bereavement, yet Mary had decided upon giving me the promise I desired without further delay.

There is no need to describe the happiness I felt, when my love and I clasped hands, and our lips met for the first time. Standing beneath the wonderful flower, the white-haired grandmother laid her trembling hand upon the shoulder of each of us, and made the sign of the cross upon our foreheads; for it was not with thoughtless levity, but as becomes children of the saints, that we entered upon the contract which was the first step towards the union we looked forward to in the solemn sacrament of marriage.

Thus our betrothal took place on *Jubilate* Sunday, A. D. 1586.

How many tears were yet to be shed before the joyous day of our nuptials!

CHAPTER XX.

Windsor repairs to Chartley, and is presented to Mary Stuart as her physician.

Of our visit to the Court there is but little to say. On the appointed day Babington and I, accompanied by St. Barbe, took little Frith, habited in new and gay attire, to Richmond. But as the Queen happened to be unwell or out of temper, she did not leave her apartments that day, and we waited in vain amongst the crowd of courtiers. St. Barbe and I had to repair to Chartley the next day, so we asked the Lord Chamberlain, who had charge of the pages, to look after the boy. St. Barbe also very kindly wrote a note to Miss Cecil, asking her to take some notice of the little orphan. Then I kissed him, he being now my future brother-in-law, and enjoined on him be careful never to forget to say his prayers; for the rest he must keep up his spirits, and try to improve in all the knightly exercises in which the pages were trained. With a smiling face he bade us good-bye, but I saw that his blue eyes were full of tears. No doubt he cried a little at first finding himself among strangers; but children's tears are like April showers, soon succeeded by sunshine.

The next morning we left London betimes. The sun had only just risen as we passed through Harrow-on-the-Hill, and its rays gilded the vanes on the towers of Woxindon. My eyes naturally turned in that direction, and lo! in the gable window of that upper room a figure was to be seen,

waving a white handkerchief in loving greeting. It is needless to say that I returned the salutation. My companion did not seem in a talkative mood, so I had all the more opportunity to contemplate, at my leisure, the simple beauty of the country through which we passed; the streams and valleys, the rivers and woods wherein I always find delight. Yes, I love a rural life, and on the day in question I felt inclined to envy the lot of the swain, who cultivates the ground, far removed from strife and contest, and to exclaim with Virgil:

O fortunatos nimium, sua si bona norint,
Agricolas! quibus ipsa, procul discordibus armis,
Fundit humo facilem victum justissima tellus!

(O too happy husbandman, did you but know your good fortune; to whom the earth of its own accord, far from the discordant clang of arms, pours upon the ground an abundant and easy livelihood.)

I tried to engage my companion in conversation about the pleasures of country life, and the description given of it in the Georgics; but he seemed to care more for serious subjects, and his tongue once loosed, he engaged me in a controversy upon religious topics. I have always been averse to disputing about matters of faith with those who think differently to myself, for I believe it seldom ends otherwise than in mutual embitterment. However, I considered myself bound to defend my creed, and to answer the questions addressed to me. So I repelled St. Barbe's attacks to the best of my power, and it must be admitted

that I found him far more considerate and open to reason than Puritans usually are. In fact I was led to hope that I might succeed in convincing him of the truth of our religion. Thus we beguiled the way, and our differences did not prevent us from being good friends when, at the close of the second day, we rode into Burton-on-Trent. Still St. Barbe persisted that there was too much of human invention in our faith to allow him to acknowledge it as the truth.

In the *Green Dragon* at Burton I was introduced to Tommy Bulky. I could not help laughing when I saw the man, so exactly did he resemble one of his own casks. He seemed at first a little offended at my mirth, but after a whispered query to my companion, who nodded assent, he came forward and held out his plump hand, saying: "Well, sir, as you are the physician to the prisoner at Chartley, whose coming was announced to me, I will not quarrel with you, considering that I supply the royal lady and all her household with beer, and such beer, sir, as you will not find equalled in all christendom, a better medicine I take it than all your doctors' drugs. Just look at me, sir! Let me tell you I am a disciple of the pure Gospel, and do not believe anything that cannot be proved by the Word of God."

"Take care what you are saying, Master Brewer," I rejoined. I never heard of any test in the Bible to prove the medicinal virtue of beer, whereas St. Paul recommends the use of wine to St. Timothy: "Use a little wine for thy stomach's sake."

"Is it so, sir? Do you really mean to say that there is nothing about beer in the Bible? That is the strongest argument I ever heard against the pure Gospel, and I shall speak to our preacher, the godly Master Bitterstone, about it." Then he struck his clenched fist on the table, adding: "Be that as it may, I am pretty sure that if St. Paul had tasted our beer, he would not have recommended wine to Timothy, but ale, and none other than our good Burton ale."

We both laughed at this sally, and parted from the fat brewer the best of friends.

Early the next morning St. Barbe and I rode over to Chartley. He was admitted at once; I had to wait at least an hour in the porter's lodge, during which time I vainly endeavoured to elicit some information respecting the imprisoned Queen from the surly porter. Presently a serving man came to conduct me to the part of the castle where Sir Amias Paulet, the castellan, had his apartments. I was received with scant courtesy; instead of returning my salute, the churlish knight snarled at me like a savage dog, muttering something about Popish vagabonds. I therefore asked rather haughtily what he took me for? Was he not aware that I was brother to Lord Windsor, and that it was by Walsingham's desire that I had come to Chartley to offer my medical services to the Queen of Scots? Thereupon he condescended so far as to offer me a chair, and to give me my instructions as to the course of conduct I was to pursue. The main point was this: I was as a rule only to see his prisoner once a week, and

in his presence; I was besides to pledge myself on oath to converse with her on no other subject but the condition of her health, and neither to convey to her, or receive from her, any information in writing.

I refused point blank to submit to these conditions. As for the first, he must understand how impossible it would be for the Queen to speak to me of her symptoms in his presence; I declared myself willing, however, to give my word of honour not to treat with her on any matter inimical to the Queen or to the welfare of the State, nor to deliver to or take from her any letters. We could not come to terms until St. Barbe was called in to put an end to the dispute. He had some trouble in persuading this Cerberus to content himself with my promise, which was to be given on the Bible. Here fresh difficulties arose, for only under protest would I lay my hand upon the Protestant version of the Scriptures, which Sir Amias produced. But after a good deal of grumbling he let that pass, and asked me if I wished to pay my first visit to his prisoner at once.

I answered in the affirmative, and he conducted me up a narrow winding staircase, opening a heavy door, bound with iron clamps, which he studiously locked behind him with a massive key. I found myself in a vaulted passage, in the upper story, out of which several apartments opened on the right and on the left. This corridor was lighted by a window at each end. But it was impossible to get from these rooms to the

windows, or to the doors, which led to other staircases, because they were shut off by an iron grating. Before one of these a sentry was stationed, who could keep the whole corridor in view, unless he was wrapped in sweet slumber, as he appeared to have been, when the rattling of Sir Amias' keys aroused him.

On my companion's voice being heard, a man of short stature, dressed in black, came out of one of the doors, and stepping up to the grating as it was slowly rolled back, asked with a ceremonious bow, what Sir Amias wished?

"Tell your mistress, that the physician about whom I spoke to her has come, and desires to pay his respects to her," the knight answered, adding as he closed the gate behind him: "Be quick, Mr. Nau, I have no time to lose."

The secretary looked at me in a scrutinizing but not unkindly manner, and leading the way into an antechamber, said he would immediately apprise her Majesty of our visit. He knocked at the door of an inner room, and gave the message to one of the waiting-women, who appeared at his summons, and who eyed me with no slight curiosity. After waiting for a few moments, a delay at which my conductor chafed and fretted, the door reopened, and we were invited to enter. The reception room into which we were admitted was of tolerable size. It was dimly lighted by two windows protected by iron bars, but was not destitute of decoration. Opposite to the door was a kind of dais, the canopy bearing the arms of Scotland, the red lion on a gold field, surrounded by a wreath of lilies and thistles,

embroidered on velvet of a dark colour. A scroll with the motto *Dieu et mon droit* in gold letters wound about the wreath. On another wall I noticed a beautifully carved cabinet, the principal ornament of which was a crucifix; and an excellent replica of Fra Angelico's painting of the Annunciation on a gold background, tastefully framed in dark wood.

I had just time to take in these details with a hasty glance, when Mary Stuart entered from her private apartments, accompanied by two attendants. She paused a moment at the door, her large clear eyes resting on me with an enquiring expression; I bowed low, but Sir Amias, whom I could have struck in the face for his lack of courtesy, instantly began without ceremony to address her thus:

"Here, Madam, is the body physician whom her Majesty the Queen and the Privy Council in their great charity have graciously granted to you. By my troth, had they asked my advice, you would have had a different sort of leech—"

"One who would have opened a vein, and effectually put an end to all my sufferings, if I understand your meaning, most worthy knight," interrupted the royal lady. "Well, Sir Amias, if you are not over courteous, you are at any rate frank, and make no secret of your wishes. I prefer it to hypocrisy; doubtless there are many more of the same mind as yourself, and the treatment I have been subjected to by my royal sister for the last eighteen years, especially since you have been my warder, should warn me to be prepared for the worst."

"It ill becomes you to complain of her Majesty, who has always shown the greatest forbearance towards you. After the Westminster judgment she might have made short work with you. It were only what you merit, considering your obstinacy in adhering to your idolatrous worship. The signs of it sicken me, whenever my office compels me to enter these apartments." Here Sir Amias looked wrathfully at the objects of devotion, adding: "Today, at least, you have reason to give thanks instead of finding fault, since her Majesty has been pleased to send a physician to minister to your needs."

While the knight was speaking, the Queen supported by her women, had crossed the room and seated herself on a stool close to one of the windows. I had a good view of her features, and was struck by the sallowness of her complexion, and the premature greyness of her hair. But her expression was sweet and touching in the extreme, and one could see what a strikingly handsome woman she had been in her youth. As she took her seat, she answered in a pleasant voice :

"I am not going to argue with you, Sir Amias, about the veneration, I pay to the images of my Redeemer and His all-merciful Mother, for I should not convince you, nor would you convince me. And as for the Westminster judgment, it could not have been other than it was, seeing that it was the verdict of bitterly prejudiced persons and that the accused was not allowed a hearing. I must await the sentence that will be pronounced by an omniscient God before all the world. For although I

know myself to be guilty of sins and failings innumerable in His sight, for which I must ask pardon for the sake of Christ's passion, I know myself to be innocent in respect to the assassination of my unfortunate husband. Therefore I must beg for the last time, that you will spare me these insulting insinuations. For granting me this gentleman's medical aid, a favour I never sought, I naturally return thanks to my royal Sister of England."

The last words were spoken doubtfully, and the Queen looked inquiringly at me. I stepped forward, and knelt upon one knee to kiss her hand. As she extended it to me, she said: "Mr. Windsor, if I remember right? Rise up. Are you a brother of Lord Windsor? How comes it that you have studied medicine?"

"It is no unusual thing for the younger sons of peers to adopt a profession in England," I replied. "And as under existing circumstances, I was but little inclined to take a post at Court, or under Government, or on the Bench—"

"You have not remained true to the ancient faith?" the Queen broke in.

"I have your Majesty, thanks be to God," I answered.

On hearing that, a grateful smile passed over her countenance and her eyes rested on me with a kindlier expression than before, despite the malediction which Sir Amias could not refrain from muttering. "Oh," she exclaimed, "I never could have dreamt of their sending me a Catholic leech! —But there remained the military profession open

to you; you might have borne arms under the brave Parma."

"Nature endowed me with a pacific disposition, one that finds more pleasure in healing wounds than in inflicting them," I rejoined. "Had I consulted my inclinations, I should have devoted myself to the service of the Muses, and your Majesty knows the saying: *Inter arma Musae silent.*"

"What, you are a scholar too!" she said. "We also loved the poets in our youth. Even now, it would give us pleasure to read one of the classics with you, or perhaps Dante's immortal poem. — You studied in Italy?"

"That cannot be," Paulet interrupted roughly. "All you have to talk about with this Windsor is your health, and that only once a week, and in my presence."

"That last condition cannot be taken literally," replied the Queen, as she rose wearily from her seat. "Mr. Windsor, will you have the goodness to come into the next room with me and my women?"

Sir Amias began to protest, but Mary Stuart, accustomed to his scolding, paid no heed to it. In the room into which I was taken, a worktable stood by the window, besides an embroidery-frame, and further on there was a large crucifix hung upon the wall, with a priedieu beneath it, on which some prayerbooks and a rosary were lying. The Queen spoke to me most cordially, asking under her breath whether I was perhaps a physician of the soul? She thought that possibly a priest had gained admittance under the guise of a leech, and appeared disappointed on discovering that this was not the

case. "I care little about the bodily health," she said. "What can any doctor do for me? the best gardener cannot produce a healthy plant if it is kept in a cellar, deprived of sun, air and light. So it is with me in the absence of liberty and of all that makes life cheerful. In fact everything concurs to make me miserable. I assure you, Mr. Windsor, my son's conduct during the last few years has been more grievous to me than my protracted captivity!" Tears filled her eyes as she spoke, and her breast heaved with sobs.

I tried to console and encourage her, assuring her that her son had been misled by bad counsellors. I said also that although I could not hold out hopes of complete recovery under present conditions, yet I trusted that much might be done to alleviate her sufferings by the use of baths in which aromatic herbs had been steeped, and by taking a little physic. Thereupon she exclaimed: "No potions for me, if you please, my good sir!" I looked at her in surprise, and she added, dropping her voice: "I am afraid that Walsingham and my other enemies have some design, in sending me a Catholic as my doctor. I should not wonder if they surreptiously mixed poison with your drugs, so as to make you responsible for my death."

I was much struck by her suggesting this, as it was the very same thing that Father Weston had mentioned as possible. I resolved to prescribe nothing for her which I could not prepare myself, and if possible, administer with my own hands. This I told her, adding that if there was anything that I or my friends could do for her Majesty, we

would risk life and limb with joy in her service. "Do you remember a man named Babington? "I asked in a low voice. "Babington! Anthony Babington!" she answered, "I do indeed remember him, and the many proofs he gave of attachment to me when I was at Sheffield's Castle. A gallant young fellow, always in good spirits. Pray assure him of my kindest regards."

I told her I had been obliged to promise on oath not to carry any messages, verbal or written, on the occasion of my professional visits to her. I assured her however, that Babington and I, and other of her friends, were taking active measures in her behalf.

Her eyes brightened, and she pressed my hand. "You need not think of conveying letters," she said. "My good friends in Paris have sent over a young man named Gifford, who has devised an ingenious plan, with the aid of the brewer who supplies me with ale, of forwarding my letters to me. You should make his acquaintance. But we must not talk of these things any longer, or my amiable jailer will grow suspicious."

We returned to the reception room, where we found Sir Amias fuming with impatience. When I mentioned amongst other means of restoring her Majesty's health, the necessity of exercise in the open air in fine weather, he became quite abusive, and declared that nothing should induce him to let her go beyond the castle walls. She might walk for an hour every day in the little garden within the precincts, but more than once a month she should not ride out. Even that gave a great deal

of trouble as he was obliged to have an escort of twenty horsemen as a guard.

We were compelled to content ourselves with this concession, and I was about to take my leave, when I perceived that Paulet had something else to say, something that even he felt reluctance to bring out. He had, he said, given his prisoner so much pleasure to-day, by introducing her to her popish physician, that it might serve to sweeten a somewhat bitter pill which he had to administer. "The fact is," he blurted out, "her gracious Majesty Queen Elizabeth was seriously displeased to hear that you, under the garb of Christian charity, entice all manner of idlers and vagabonds into the castle. Therefore she has given orders that henceforth no alms were to be distributed either by your servants or yourself [1]). That I beg you to understand, once for all." He turned to me, and we took our departure. "So my poor clients also must suffer on account of my inability to ingratiate myself with Elizabeth! God forgive her this injury done to Himself in the person of the poor!"

Such were the words I heard Mary Stuart utter, as I followed Sir Amias out of the apartment. When we got downstairs, he sent me away, curtly telling me, I must get a lodging somewhere, for I could not be accommodated with a room in the castle; besides he had already quite enough Papists under his roof.

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[1]) Hosack l. c. II. 325.

CHAPTER XXI.

Windsor acquires an extensive practice, and hears a very startling piece of news.

Finding myself dismissed in so unceremonious a fashion by the churlish knight, I passed out of the castle gates and repaired to the *Mayflower* inn, where I had left my horse that morning. My interview with the captive Queen, her gentleness and christian patience had profoundly moved me. "You have been in the presence of a saint," I said to myself; and urged by the respect and compassion that filled my heart, I once more made a solemn resolution to strain every nerve, if not to release her from her present position, at any rate to alleviate it in some wise.

The *Mayflower* in which I now took up my quarters was a comfortable, solidly built house, such as one frequently sees in the region between Stafford and Derby, with pointed gables, thatched roof and curiously carved beams of dark wood set into the plastered walls. The swinging signboard over the door, a marvel of rustic art, displayed a huge golden lily, from the flower of which formerly rose the figure of our Lady with the Divine Child; but this abomination, as the friendly but garrulous tavern keeper informed me, had been painted out in more godly times.

I experienced no difficulty in coming to terms with my host; a good sized room with a gable window, commanding a fine view of the surrounding country was assigned me; the opposite one, I

was told, being let to a Mr. Gifford, whose family, now much reduced in circumstances, had been one of the wealthiest in that part of the country. A very pleasant young gentleman, the host added, but unfortunately a Papist, and just then absent in London.

I called for ink and paper, and seated myself at the table by the open window to indite a letter to my sweetheart, Mary Bellamy, whom I fondly termed, in the words of Horace, *animae dimidium meae*, my soul's other half. I soon filled four pages with the account of my ride through the smiling country in the sweet springtide, giving a description of the saintly Queen and the shameful manner in which she was treated, of my room at the *Mayflower*, and most important of all, of the love that longed to find happiness in making her happy.

My pleasant task was ended, and my epistle sealed and subscribed, when the host came to tell me dinner was served. After the repast, which I wound up with a tankard of excellent ale, I seated myself in the garden beneath a shady lime tree, and lulled by the humming of the bees among the blossoming fruit trees, I fell asleep. My drowsiness did not last long. I was soon aroused by a clamour of voices, and starting up, beheld a crowd of mendicants, women, children and afflicted persons, crying and lamenting, scolding and grumbling in a manner fit to touch a heart of stone. On presenting themselves at the castle to receive their accustomed alms from Queen Mary, they had been told that she was weary of their insolence and importunity, and would give them nothing more,

much less come down into the courtyard to them. This was too barefaced a lie to be believed, and the porter was soon made to acknowledge that a messenger had arrived that morning from London, bearing orders from the Queen, that the almsgiving at Chartley was to be put a stop to for the future. Happening to descry me in the garden of the *Mayflower*, the repulsed mendicants conjectured that I was the bird of ill omen, and raised a deafening tumult of angry cries. I think they would have thrown stones at me, had not the inn-keeper hastened to my rescue, informing the people that I was not only a friend of Mary Stuart, but her newly appointed body physician. Then the tables were turned, and the sick and infirm were no less clamourous in their entreaties that I would give them the benefit of my professional help and advice. I thought I could not do less than comply with their request, in virtue of the office I now held about her Majesty's person, so I prescribed a few simple remedies for them, in most instances adding a few groats to pay the apothecary, remembering the words of the Gospel: "As long as you did it to one of these my least brethren, you did it to me."

Before long, I had acquired an extensive but highly unremunerative practice in the neighbourhood, and was in a fair way of reducing myself to beggary. But my royal patient somehow heard of it, and from time to time she would slip into my hand a good round sum of money, saying it was for me and my poor. Thus I experienced the truth of the saying that charity will bring no man to ruin.

When the crowd of beggars had dispersed, I returned to my seat under the lime tree, and took from my pocket a volume of my favourite Virgil. But before I had read many lines, the sound of voices coming through the open window of the guest room, attracted my attention. It was St. Barbe, in hot altercation with an individual unknown to me, the godly Ezechiel Bitterstone, as I afterwards learnt. St. Barbe was laying before him Miss Cecil's difficulties, expressed somewhat differently. I listened to the discussion with no little interest.

St. Barbe asked the preacher, if he really thought Calvin's teaching to be the best; and on the other replying in the affirmative, he asked whether Calvin's doctrines were taught before Calvin's time?

"Undoubtedly," was the reply; "they were taught by Christ and the Apostles."

"Then this doctrine, taught by Christ and the Apostles, was lost at the period when Calvin began to preach?"

"It was contained in Holy Scripture; but the right interpretation of the Scriptures was lost."

"Had it been lost for long?"

"It is impossible to assign any time, for the earliest Fathers of the Church wrested the Scriptures from their true meaning to uphold grievous errors, such as the mass, the veneration of saints and other essential matters."

"Then," St. Barbe continued, "I am to believe that the whole Church hath erred for several centuries, and been under the dominion of a lying

spirit. How can that be reconciled with Christ's promises, recorded in St. Mathew's Gospel: "I am with you all days; and, The gates of hell shall not prevail against her?"

"Are you a Papist in disguise," the preacher retorted, "that you try to ensnare me with these crafty questions?"

St. Barbe replied that he was an honest Protestant, but finding himself incapable of answering the doubts of a friend, he wished to hear them refuted by Mr. Bitterstone.

The preacher declared himself most willing to do this. One must come to the study of the Bible, he said, without pride and cunning phrases which are of the devil. "I am with you all days," did not mean that teachers of religion could never fall into errors.

"That is quite true," St. Barbe answered. "The words do not refer to every individual teacher, but to the Church, the divinely commissioned teacher. It cannot be doubted that the Saviour would ensure for that divine truth which He makes it incumbent on all men to accept, immunity from corruption until the consummation of ages."

"He has done enough, by providing that the truth in all its integrity should always be found in the Holy Scriptures."

"I cannot see that to be enough. The Lord said: Preach the Gospel, teach all nations; and it is to the teachers and preachers that this divine assistance is promised."

"But I," said the minister, "can prove from the Bible that for centuries the Church has erred, and taught abominable idolatry, so your interpretation of those passages cannot be correct."

"And I," responded St. Barbe, "consider that the Divinity of Jesus Christ, upon which the whole fabric of Christianity rests, is conclusive proof that, according to His promise and the general tenour of His teaching, He has provided for mankind an infallible Teacher; hence on no single point of doctrine can the Church be in error."

"What! not in regard to the abomination of the mass?"

"Hitherto, God knows, I have always thought as you do. But just explain this to me: You continually quote the Bible in proof of what you say; the Papists do the same, and they bring forward the interpretation of learned and holy men, who have studied the Word of God with prayer and fasting, in a far more conscientious and diligent manner than many of our own preachers. I repeat, find a way out of this difficulty: Either Christ's promise has been fulfilled, and in that case the Church has not erred; or it has not been fulfilled, and if that be so, Christ is not God, a blasphemous thought which be it far from us to entertain."

By this time the minister's wrath got the better of him; he abused his antagonist for a vile Papist, a priest of Baal perhaps, or even a wily Jesuit.

He would go to the sheriff, he said, and get a warrant for his arrest, for he deserved the stake as much as Servet, an accused wretch, whom Calvin caused to be burnt at Geneva. St. Barbe only laughed at such threats, and advised Mr. Bitter-

stone to go first to Sir Amias and find out who he was. The minister went on for some time with a vehement tirade against Popery, quoting many texts and urging the necessity of faith alone in matters of belief; his companion answered not a word; I resumed my book and left off listening.

I had not read many lines when a young man of rather prepossessing appearance entered the garden, and coming up to me, asked in a peculiar soft voice, whether I was Edward Windsor? On my replying that I was, he informed me that his name was Gilbert Gifford, and taking a letter from his pocket-book, he handed it to me, not without glancing round to see if we were alone.

"From Anthony Babington!" I exclaimed, as I read the superscription. "Hush!" he said, laying his finger on his lips. "One cannot be too careful not to mention names, in an affair like this. Would you object to taking a stroll with me on the moors? One is never so safe as out on the moors, where there is neither tree nor bush, tapestry or curtain, behind which an eavesdropper may be concealed?"

I agreed to the proposal, and accompanied Gifford for the distance of about a mile from the castle, where fields and meadows gave place to a barren tract of country, where we were absolutely alone. Not a sound broke the stillness except the cry of the lapwing, that makes its nest among the moorland heather. Hitherto we had conversed on indifferent subjects, but now my companion began to speak of our plans with regard to the Scottish Queen in a manner, which showed that

Babington had fully initiated him into the secret. As Queen Mary had mentioned his name to me as that of a confidential agent, sent by her partisans in Paris, I was not surprised, only there was that about the young man's manner that gave me the impression of great slyness. He then told me at great length how he had been commissioned by the Archbishop of Glasgow and the Spanish Ambassador in Paris, to organize a means of communicating to the prisoner at Chartley the intelligence of Parma's meditated invasion, or any other tidings of consequence; and how on the strength of their recommendation Chateauneuf had amply supplied him with means. He proceeded to inform me of the plan concocted with the brewer, also of the successful result of the experiment made in the previous week, in consequence of which Chateauneuf had intrusted to him a packet of most important letters, which were to be transmitted to her on the morrow, with the weekly supply of beer. Amongst the letters was one from Babington to Nau, asking for the key to a new alphabet in cipher.

I was astonished at the ingenuity displayed in this contrivance, and asked him however he had hit upon it. He said he was a native of this part of the country, and had lived for some time in Burton, where he made the acquaintance of the fat brewer, and found out how clever he was. Many a time a young roebuck, entrapped in the park of Tixall, had been smuggled into Stafford by him in one of his beer barrels, and this had suggested the employment of a similar means in order to convey letters to and from the royal prisoner. Any sus-

picions I might have felt being thus allayed, I read Babington's note. It told me that by the middle of June, Salisbury would have made every preparation for flight; also that other matters which it was wiser not to commit to paper, would be told me by word of mouth by the bearer of the epistle, who was perfectly trustworthy.

"It is of the greatest importance," Gifford continued, his shifty eyes ever looking to the right and left, "that Mary Stuart should be conveyed to a place of safety, before either Parma lands, or some other event" — he emphasized this word, and repeated it slowly—"*some other event* takes place, which would imperil her life, were she still a prisoner in the hands of her enemies."

I looked inquiringly at him, and he went on: "We shall receive notice of Parma's landing in due time. At present his preparations are not far advanced. Of course it would raise a perfect storm against Mary Stuart, who would be regarded as his accomplice, and her life would not be worth an hour's purchase, if she were in Elizabeth's power, or indeed anywhere on English soil. The other event which we must take into consideration is the sudden death of Elizabeth."

"The *sudden* death?" I answered. "Why do you lay such a peculiar accent upon the word? You surely do not mean her assassination!"

"Hush, hush!" interrupted Gifford. "One must beware of using such an expression, even in confidential conversation. It is quite significant to speak of *sudden* death. Good God! Is that such an unheard of, impossible occurrence? Two years

ago the Prince of Orange died suddenly. And I do not think he was more hated, or more justly hated, than Elizabeth."

"There is some scheme afloat! You know more than you choose to say. Merciful Heavens! Babington will surely not fall in with such a desperate act! Say that he will not!" I exclaimed.

"Do be quiet and divest yourself of that bad habit of mentioning names," he continued. "You might make matters very awkward for yourself and for others too. Your friend and his comrades of St. Giles have not the slightest intention of hurting a hair of her Majesty's head, although she richly deserves it, and the wording of the Pope's Bull might sound like a justification. Let us however just suppose, for the sake of argument, that you or I or any one of our party, heard casually of something that might cause Elizabeth's death; would it not be your bounden duty to make inquiries as to when such an event was likely to ensue? For if it happened at an inopportune moment, it might be fatal to Mary Stuart as well; while on the other hand, if it took place at a seasonable time, it might facilitate, not her deliverance only, but her elevation to the throne, and thereby promote the re-establishment of the Catholic religion in England."

Then on a sudden a thought struck me: I remembered the man in the *Paris Garden*, who was such a first-rate shot. I had seen him of late very frequently in Babington's company. "You mean Savage, John Savage," I said to Gifford. "And Babington is privy to it!"

"When will you stop that unfortunate trick of proclaiming everyone's name?" he rejoined. "Well, let us assume that to be the man's name, and that he has had an object in practising with the pistol, until he can hit any mark at thirty paces distance; is it not of the greatest moment to us, that the shot should not be fired at an unsuitable time? Otherwise it might strike two hearts. In other words, we must know what is going on, in order to turn events to the advantage of the Scottish Queen, and of our holy religion. On that account it is desirable for Anthony to keep friends with the marksman, though he does not approve his designs."

"Keep friends with such a wretch!" I answered indignantly. "Babington has lost his senses. He ought to inform against him instantly."

"He does not think himself obliged to do that, nor do I consider that he is. It is one thing to do a deed oneself, another, not to prevent its being done. I do not see that under the circumstances it would be anyone's duty to give information."

"I will do so myself!" I cried.

"Do not be precipitate," he said. "In the first place, what proof have you against Savage? None, absolutely none. Nor could you accuse him without incriminating your friends and yourself, disclosing the plot, and destroying all chance of liberating the prisoner, nay, her very life might be the price of your indiscretion. The fact is, the shot in question would very likely have been fired

before now, had not Anthony held the man back, until all was in readiness here."

I rang my hands in my trouble. "Meanwhile," I said, "in all probability Walsingham is on the track of this man; perhaps he has already caught him and put him on the rack! Who knows but that at this very hour he may, under stress of torture, have revealed all our names as accomplices and accessories to his bloody purpose! If so, nothing remains for us but the gallows and the hangman's knife; and some of the best names in England will be branded for ever!"

"Yes, my dear fellow," Gifford coolly rejoined, "you had best consider well before you embark in this sort of business. If the plan for delivering the Queen fails, nothing will save you from a traitor's death."

"I have considered all that, and am prepared to lay down my life in the enterprise, for that will not be regarded as a blot upon my escutcheon, whatever the verdict of the royal law courts may be. But to be condemned as an accomplice in a murder! Every idea of such a deed was scrupulously excluded from our project, and I should feel justified in retiring from it, if Babington combines, independently of us, with so dangerous an individual. I shall reflect upon it, and decide what it is my duty to do."

"Do so by all means," Gifford answered. "But remember your withdrawal will not put a stop to the enterprise, and your name will always be connected with it. Besides, you will lay yourself open to a charge of cowardice."

I repeated that I would think the matter over, and allow no consideration to prevent me from doing what I thought right. Then I asked him when he was returning to London?

"To-morrow," he replied, "I shall receive the Queen's correspondence from the honest brewer, and carry it to London at once."

"Very well," I answered, "perhaps I shall ask you to take some letters for me at the same time." And here our conversation closed.

That evening in my solitary chamber I pondered long over the startling intelligence I had heard, without, however, arriving at any decision as to the course of conduct I should pursue. The thoughts that perplexed me in my waking hours haunted my pillow at night; at length I concluded to remain passive, and, for the present at least, content myself with writing to Babington a letter of warning, couched in general terms.

Nothing worthy of note marked the next few days. Gifford received from the brewer, as he expected, a thick packet of letters, addressed, he told me, to the French ambassador, the Archbishop of Glasgow, the Duke of Guise, and other of Queen Mary's partisans. There was also a short letter to Babington; with these Gifford started at once on his way to London, and I gave my letter to my sweetheart Mary, besides a few lines to Babington, into his charge.

CHAPTER XXII.

Windsor describes his life at Chartley, and tells the reason of his hasty return to London.

For several weeks I led a quiet country life at Chartley. My humble patients visited me daily, and in ever increasing numbers, so that the host of the *Mayflower* was fain to place at my disposal a small room on the ground floor to be used as a consulting room.

Frequently I sought out the sick myself, in their scattered dwellings on the banks of the Done and the Trent, or the borders of the widespreading moorland. By this means I learnt how faithfully the rustic population clung to the old religion. Christian almsgiving seemed quite to have died out under the influence of the so called "pure Gospel", the new creed wherein faith was everything and works were nothing. The numerous monasteries, the great dispensers of charity, at whose gates the impotent and indigent never sought help in vain, had been suppressed, and their revenues bestowed upon highborn favourites of the Queen, who squandered on their pleasures the "heritage of the poor", as church property was considered to be in former days. Thus the alms distributed by the imprisoned Queen, were doubly welcome, and served to enhance the sympathy and compassion which misfortune invariably evokes from the hearts of the poor. Everywhere I heard her spoken of with affection and respect, while never a good word was said of Elizabeth and her coun-

sellors. I felt certain that we might rely upon the peasantry of those parts for aid in our enterprise, as well as for secrecy.

I began in my turn to construct a scheme which could be carried out independently of Babington and his comrades. In the course of my visits to the sick, in the forest that stretches to the north from Burton nearly to Derby, I had come upon the cottage of a gamekeeper whose son had been attacked and severely injured by a wild boar. The savage animal had torn with its tusks the flesh of the boy's thigh penetrating to the bone, before the father could hasten to his rescue. The wound was so much inflamed, and the boy in so high a fever, when the father conducted me to his bedside, that I almost despaired of saving his life. For some time I made my way daily to the sequestered spot where the cottage stood, a distance of some four miles along a solitary path shaded by high fir trees and spreading oaks. I quite enjoyed the walk, and I was rewarded for my pains, for, with the blessing of God, and the use of suitable remedies, the boy's vigorous constitution triumphed. When the people discovered that I was a Catholic, their attachment was unbounded. One day I surprised them saying their beads by the sufferer's bedside; they left off and appeared embarrassed, but I drew my rosary from my pocket and said it with them. When I went away, the gamekeeper walked a good part of the way with me. "Mr. Windsor," he said, "God reward you for all you have done for my poor lad. A man like me can do nothing more than pray for you."

I thanked him, and said his prayers were the best recompense, adding: "But we live in times when a Catholic may easily stand in need of help and protection from his fellow Christians—"

He interrupted me before I could get further. "Oh," he said, "if you or one of your friends, or one of our priests should happen to get into trouble with the people there in London—you understand me—do you come to me. No pursuivant will hunt you out in my cottage, and you could be accommodated with a pleasant little chamber upstairs. There is plenty of game to be had in the wood, and I would share my last crust with you!"

"Remember," I said, "that to harbour a priest or any other outlaw, may cost you dearer than a morsel of bread."

"If I had to give my life for it, I would do so most willingly for the faith or for my persecuted brethren."

The man spoke with feeling; I was deeply touched and shook him by the hand, saying some day I might perhaps remind him of his generous offer. And as I pursued my solitary way homeward, I reflected whether it might not be more advisable to keep the Queen, after her release from prison, concealed in that lonely spot for some months, till the first excitement should have subsided, than to ride post haste accross two counties to the coast, and put her on board ship. How easily some unforeseen occurrence, incident to this long ride—a ride which might besides too sorely tax the Queen's strength—such as an accident to one of the horses,

uncertainty as to the right road, official warning preceding us, might frustrate the whole scheme! Whereas were she to remain in concealment a while, no danger would accrue to her from Parma's landing, or that other event, should Babington fail to avert it. And if the invasion either did not take place, or came to nothing, after the lapse of several months the flight would be much easier of execution. In a single night's ride she could reach Lancashire, where many Catholic families of position would readily receive her, and she could proceed at night by short stages to the Mersey, and there take ship.

I thought over this plan a good deal and determined to propose it to Babington when next I saw him. In the interim I gave the gamekeeper money to lay in a stock of provisions, for my mind was made up, that should an opportunity present itself for carrying off the Queen, I would act on my own responsibility, and not allow the occasion to slip.

On my return to the *Mayflower*, I found my host awaiting me at the door, with the intelligence that Mr. Gifford had already been there twice, and was coming again. He handed me a letter, which Gifford had left for me. As the handwriting was unfamiliar to me, I opened it at once. How delighted I was when my eye fell on the signature: *In Jesus and Mary your own true love, Mary Bellamy.* I could not conceal my pleasure, and hastened upstairs to my chamber, to devour the contents of the epistle.

I need not have been in so great a hurry, for this first love letter contained much that was bitter as well as sweet. The true and loving heart of the writer spoke in every line, but the general impression was a sad one. She told me that since my last visit to Woxindon, her sister Anne had become more contrary and self-willed, and would not listen to a word of rebuke either from her or their grandmother. On the same day that we had been engaged, Babington had asked to be allowed to pay his addresses to Anne, and Mrs. Bellamy had not only refused him, but had forbidden him the house. This had made her sister extremely angry; and in defiance of her grandmother's express prohibition she had several times had stealthy meetings with Babington either in the wood, or the ruined castle. On hearing of this from the old serving-man John, her uncle Remy, who had always been so indulgent towards Anne, his favourite niece, had spoken very seriously to her. This she took amiss, saying everybody in the house took part against her. Windsor, she knew with certainty, was involved in no less hazardous an enterprise than Babington, yet he was her sister's accepted lover, while she was not allowed to hold the most innocent intercourse with Babington. She would, however, she declared, find some way of attaining her end. She was as good as her word. A few days later, Anne had come into her sister's room at night, embraced her fondly, begged her forgiveness, and entreated her to say a good word for her to the grandmother; then before Mary could answer, she had run off and shut herself in her own little room. Mary

hoped that her sister had come to a better mind, and all would go well. But the next morning Anne did not appear at the breakfast table, and on search being made for her, her room was empty, her bed had not been slept in, her chest was open, her clothes and valuables were gone. It appeared that she had caused these to be secretly removed to the old castle on the previous day, and in the night, as they supposed, she had absconded with Babington. At any rate Babington would know of her whereabouts, so uncle Remy had immediately taken horse to London, to make inquiries of him. He had however been unable to meet with him; and therefore Mary wrote, at the desire of her grandmother and her uncles, to beg me, if possible, to go to them for a few days, to advise them, and help them to find the fugitive. The letter closed with kind messages and assurances of undying affection; and a postscript added that satisfactory tidings had been received of Frith, whom Lord Burghley's daughter had taken under her special care and protection.

Of course I resolved to start on my way to London the very next morning, after my professional visit to the Queen. I read and re-read the letter, picturing to myself the grief of my sweetheart, the anxiety of the aged gentlewoman, at this fatal step on the part of a goodhearted but terribly wilful girl. At the same time I felt excessively angry with Babington for having taken advantage of the folly of a mere child. I determined to take him severely to task, my position as Anne's future brother-in-law giving me the right to do this. The

more I pondered over what had occurred, the less favourable was my estimate of Babington's character. Hitherto I had only seen the good side; his frankness, his pleasant, facetious disposition, his devotion to his friends and to the cause of Catholicism; his daring, his courage, his skill in all knightly exercises. But this event had brought out in glaring colours the levity I had already remarked in him, and I felt that it made him untrustworthy as a friend, and dangerous as the leader of such an enterprise as ours.

I was still pacing up and down my room, thinking over the contents of the letter I held in my hand, when Gifford entered.

"What do these grave looks mean, Mr. Windsor?" he inquired. "No bad news, I hope, from your lady love."

I was not going to let this man into our family secrets, so I told him all was well with my betrothed, but in the present day there was much to make a good Catholic sad.

"True enough," he rejoined. "But I am happy to say that I bring you good news." He opened the door to make sure that no one was listening, then dropping his voice, he continued: "If we speak low and mention no names, I can tell you now. He then informed me that all was going on well with our undertaking; they had heard from Lancashire that the way would be made smooth in another fortnight at the latest; Anthony had had a most encouraging letter from the prisoner, and only a few more details remained to be settled. To discuss these, the friends were to meet next Friday evening at the *Blue Boar* in St. Giles-in-the-fields.

"This is Monday," I answered. To-morrow I must visit my patient. I can get to Woxindon by Thursday evening, and on Friday I will be at the *Blue Boar*. How about Savage?"

"If only you would not blurt out names!" Gifford whispered. "All is well; you shall hear particulars on Friday."

Thereupon he bade me good night and took his departure. I busied myself in preparing to start on my journey to London directly after my visit to the castle on the morrow.

CHAPTER XXIII.

We pass a night full of terrors, yet not barren in consolation.

I will not dwell upon my meeting with my sweetheart, when I reached Woxindon after a long day's ride. The two months of separation had only served to enhance her charms in my eyes, and the tears on her cheeks, tears half of joy, half of sorrow, might well be compared to dewdrops on the petals of an opening rose. But the old lady had aged perceptibly in the short interval; I noticed how trembling were the hands she extended to me in welcome. By her two sons I was also kindly received; as soon as I had taken some refreshment, I started for London with uncle Remy, because it was contrary to the good old-fashioned notions of propriety for two persons who were betrothed to pass the night under the same roof.

On the way uncle Remy said that Anne's elopement caused them less concern since they had heard that Babington had married her at once. The nuptial bond had been tied by a seminary priest from Douay, named Ballard, the usual preliminaries being dispensed with in virtue of the extraordinary powers granted by the Holy See to missioners. Nevertheless he feared that Anne's contumacy and disobedience augured ill for the happiness of her married life. Yet he was prepared to forgive her and recognize Babington as his nephew, both in his own name and on behalf of the other members of his family, provided they would both acknowledge they had done wrong, and ask

forgiveness. This reconciliation he hoped might be brought about by means of my mediation. I willingly promised to do my utmost to effect it.

When we emerged from the leafy shelter of the wood, we perceived that a storm was coming up in the west. The sun had disappeared behind a bank of heavy clouds, which were spreading rapidly over the sky, and we put spurs to our steeds in order to reach our destination before the outbreak of the tempest. As we passed through St. Giles, the first gusts of wind, heralds of the coming storm, swept over the plain, enveloping us in a cloud of dust. Low ragged clouds drifted across the sky, like a troop of skirmishers, pelting us with shot in the form of large heavy rain drops. After them came the vanguard of the army, raging and roaring, the main body following in seried ranks upon their heels. We were galloping through Newgate when the war of the elements broke loose, and the artillery of the heavens, which we had heard muttering in the distance, was discharged over our heads. Flashes of red lightning rent the sky, accompanied by sharp peals of thunder, while rain and hailstones pattered down on roof and pavement. We were fain to draw our cloaks over our heads and press onward with all speed to Tichbourne's dwelling house in the strand. We arrived there wet through, but met with a warm welcome, and were soon provided with dry clothes and a glass of hot punch, while the friendly housekeeper took our dripping cloaks to be hung up by the kitchen fire.

We sat in the twilight and told one another of what had occurred since we last met. The

storm that was raging without, caused it to become dark long before the ordinary time, for it was mid-summer. The rain which came down like a water-spout, dashed against the windows that looked towards the river, while the panes rattled with every fresh peal of thunder.

Tichbourne spoke of his lawsuit; he said that his counsel had informed him, in so many words, that he could not hope for a favourable verdict, unless he attended the reformed service. This led to a fresh discussion of the vexed question, whether it was allowable, when considerable property was at stake, to assist occasionally as a mere spectator at the heretical worship. I maintained that it was; Tichbourne said no, and he was right, because to be present in the Protestant church was considered as a proof of apostasy. Our debate was put a stop to by a loud knock at the door which opened on to the garden, and my friend, the boatman hurried in, looking, to borrow a homely expression, like a drowned rat.

"Mr. Windsor is here!" he exclaimed. "Thank God, I am not too late. Save yourselves, gentlemen, to-night all Papists are to be put to the sword!"

"Why, Bill, what strange story is this?"

"I will tell you presently, when you are in safety. Should I come out for a stupid joke, on a night like this? Do not stop to consider, for God's sake! Take your money and your arms, throw on your cloaks, and in with you into the boat! As true as I stand here, your life hangs on a thread, and we have not a moment to lose!"

We looked at one another in bewilderment.

But the man was so evidently in earnest, that we thought it best to follow him. Tichbourne put in his pocket all the money he had in the house; we buckled on our swords and wrapped our mantles round us. Meanwhile Bill informed us that it was reported as a certain fact that a decree had been passed by the Queen's Council for the massacre of all Papists in their houses on that night. More than once already such rumours had been set afloat, which in those troubled times easily found credence, and put all Catholics in mortal fear.[1]) Many persons then abandoned their homes and spent the night in the fields; others hired boats on the Thames, and floated up and down the river. We thought possible there might be a murderous uprising of the people, in consequence of a lying rumour about the coming invasion being spread about. It struck me that perhaps our conspiracy was discovered, and the issue of a decree for our arrest had given rise to the report. In times such as ours, no man felt himself safe.

So out we went in rain and storm under Bill's guidance, and soon found ourselves on the river's bank. The boat, tossed about by the waves, was half full of water, and we had to ladle it out with our hats before intrusting our persons to the stream. At last we put off, and so strong were wind and current, that it was all the sturdy arm of our boatman could do to direct the course of the boat aright.

"I will take you to my home," he said, "you will be safe there. Then I must go to St. Paul's

[1]) Cf. Troubles of our Catholic Forefathers. Series ii. p. 409.

stairs, to fetch another friend of yours. He is to be there by 10 o'clock. Listen, half past nine is striking, we must make haste. Look out for the bridge ahead of us!''

In a few minutes we reached St. Catharine's docks, and made the boat fast to one of the posts beneath the boatsman's dwelling. Bill gave the signal; the rope ladder was let down, and we all three climbed up into the narrow room, dimly lighted by a small oil lamp. There we found several Catholics who lived in the neighbourhood, and had sought refuge in the humble abode. Women and children cried and lamented; the men paced up and down; some guarded the door, others watched from the window what went on in the alley below. One said one thing, one another.

''On the stroke of midnight,'' said one, ''the great bell of St. Paul's will give the signal for the massacre.''

''No, a shot will be fired from the Tower, when it is to begin,'' another asserted.

''Oh, it has already commenced in St. Dunstan's and Whitefriars,'' a third declared. ''No mercy is shown even to women and children.''

''I have been informed,'' another said, ''that no shooting is to go on, by order of the Privy Council, lest, if the gunpowder is used freely, it will run short when the Spaniards land.''

''They have landed already, near Dover, 50,000 strong; to-morrow they will be before London,'' was the confidential assertion of the same individual, who stated that the massacre had already begun. ''Those who are fortunate enough to live

through this night, will see the old Catholic days back in England. The Spaniards once here, we shall see no more of Anne Boleyn's daughter, who has done all the mischief, for they will set Mary Stuart on the throne. Bolt the doors, friends, and be patient, to-morrow may have good things in store for us!"

One did not know what to make of these contradictory reports. My friends and I were shown into a small upper room, where we could be quiet. Standing at the window, we gazed out on the broad river. The rain had abated, the clouds had broken, and the moon cast an uncertain light on the waves as they hurried by. By these fitful gleams we could discern a quantity of craft of every size, crowded with people, passing to and fro.

"Fugitive brethren!" said Tichbourne. "Merciful Heavens, what days we live in! It could hardly have been worse for us in Rome, under Nero or Diocletian."

"Our enemies are evidently determined to drive us to desperation," I remarked.

"Here comes our worthy boatman with a new freight," exclaimed Bellamy, pointing to a light skiff that was being made fast to the posts supporting the house. At that moment a ray of moonlight broke through the clouds, enabling us to recognize the persons seated in the boat. "By George! it is my niece and Babington," he ejaculated.

I laid my hand on his: "Here is an opportunity, my dear friend, to practice a Christian virtue, and show that it is not with your lips alone that you say daily: Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors."

He returned the pressure saying: "You do well, Windsor, to remind me of that. But go you to meet them, and just say a word to them before I see them."

Accordingly I went down into the lower room, which I entered just as Babington and his young wife ascended the rope ladder. In the dim light they did not recognize me at once, so I left them a few minutes to recover themselves, before taking Babington aside, and speaking to him. "You here, Windsor!" was his astonished exclamation. "Yes, and Tichbourne too, and — do not excite yourself — Bellamy!"

"What, Remy! Good Heavens! In that case my wife and I had better take refuge somewhere else. She is so excitable, and is so irritable at the least mention of Woxindon, that I often regret having persuaded her to leave it."

"That makes it all the more necessary to avail yourself of the occasion that now presents itself for a reconciliation. I give you my word for it. Bellamy is prepared to forgive all, if you and Anne will acknowledge yourselves in the wrong, as freely as I forgive you."

"As you!" he rejoined. "Pray what have you to forgive? Was it not through your tale-telling that the old lady turned me out of the house? What were we to do, but to take the law into our own hands?"

"My good fellow, I assure you upon my honour, that never a word to your disadvantage did I utter to Mistress Bellamy. It was a servant who reported to the old grandmother your secret

meetings in the ruined castle, against which I had already warned you. But let that pass now. At any rate your mode of procedure has caused much distress to all the members of the family at Woxindon. And the fact that at this moment we have, as it is reported, a sword hanging over our heads, is reason enough to ask pardon of all against whom we have offended, and seek mutual reconciliation."

For all his levity and vanity, Babington had too good a nature to allow him to harden his heart against this friendly overture. He grasped my hand affectionately: "God bless you, Edward," he said. "I see that I have wronged you, and given pain to others, and I will do all I can to make reparation."

He then went up to Anne, who was sitting apart, and talked some time to her. At first she seemed inclined to stand out, but presently she gave way, and he brought her to me. I shook hands with her, and seeing that she was in tears, I bade her keep up her spirits, for all would go well. Then she began to sob convulsively, declaring that her people never would forgive her the grief she had occasioned them. My only answer was to lay her hand on my arm and lead her upstairs, into Uncle Bellamy's presence.

"Here is Anne," I said as we entered, "heartily sorry for the rash step she took, which her youth and inexperience may well excuse."

The young lady tried to throw herself at her uncle's feet, but he caught her in his arms and clasped her to his breast, scolding and carressing her in one breath, while she sobbed violently, accusing herself in the bitterest manner. I could

not look on unmoved, so I left the room, and only returned half an hour later, giving her time to recover her composure before bringing Babington on the scene. When at last I took him up, we found uncle and niece sitting together at the window, through which the moonlight now streamed into the apartment, for the storm was over, and the clouds were dispersed. I acted as mediator, but I saw it cost Bellamy a struggle to lay his hand in that of the thoughtless youth, who had violated the rights of hospitality, and brought additional grief on an already suffering household. But he overcame himself manfully, and spoke kindly to Babington, calling him "nephew."

I was heartily glad of this, and felt I could now die in peace, if we were really to lay down our lives that night. For as nothing is more wretched than hatred and strife, so nothing is more comforting and encouraging than the reconciliation and reunion of those who have been at variance.

In the meantime midnight had come and we awaited in anxious expectation the dreaded signal of attack. The most contradictory reports had, during the last half hour reached us; some persons asserting positively that the gangs of hired assassins were assembled in readiness in St. Paul's churchyard, at Charing Cross, on Tower Hill, at London Stone, and that the Catholics were all to be driven onto London Bridge, thence to be precipitated headlong into the river. Others on the contrary, declared, it was all an idle rumour, only set afloat, for the purpose of driving Papists to desperation. Some of Walsingham's emissaries

had been heard to make the announcement in one or other of the taverns and wine shops of the city, which they frequented; hence it might safely be concluded that there was no truth in it, otherwise the Chief Secretary's agents would not have let it get about beforehand. This reason had great weight with me; yet it was with no little trepidation that I listened for the stroke of midnight. At length it rang out from a neighbouring church tower; a moment more, and with beating hearts we heard it slowly toll out from St. Paul's. But the last stroke died away, and neither the great bell, nor the Tower guns gave forth a sound. We breathed more freely. "It was a cock-and-bull story, after all," said I. "Do not make too sure of that," remarked one of my companions. "The signal may yet be given."

Ten more minutes passed; then we determined to send Bill, and his boy, Johnny, out to get tidings. The bolts were cautiously drawn back, the door was opened, when we caught the sound of cries in an adjoining alley. The door was instantly closed again, and all exclaimed "They are coming!"

"'Tis but a few revellers getting home from 'The Jolly Sailor,' half seas over," said Bill. "Let me go out."

After a little more discussion we ventured upon opening the door again, and Bill and the boy issued forth to learn the real state of affairs.

On their return they said there were a great many people in the streets and squares, all talking of a massacre that was to be, and of a hostile invasion; but nowhere were any armed men to be

seen, neither on Tower Hill, nor at Charing Cross, nor at St. Paul's.

"Only an idle scare again this time, thank God," said Babington, who with the others, had come down to the lower room before midnight.

"But how long are we to endure this intolerable tyranny on the part of the Queen's ministers? We all know that quite recently Lord Burghley was heard to declare, he would bring matters to such a pass, that in a short time Catholics should be reduced to such a state of destitution that they should be unable to assist one another, and would be thankful to feed swine if thereby they could find husks to assuage their hunger!" [1])

It would have been pardonable, if on such an occasion as this, a few words had been let drop, which the myrmidons of the law would have reckoned as treasonable. Yet such was the timidity and apprehension continually felt at that time by Catholics, that, although we English are wont to pride ourselves on our love of liberty, not one of those present ventured to utter a syllable against Burghley and his associates, in answer to Babington's indignant outburst.

At last one and another slipped away to their own homes, after thanking the worthy boatman for the shelter he had afforded them, and leaving a substantial proof of their gratitude behind them. When the excitement was over, I enquired after his sick daughter; he said she was not as well as she had been, he had taken her to a neighbour's house for the night, for the sake of greater quiet.

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[1]) Troubles of our Catholic Forefathers. Series ii. p. 109.

I promised to visit her as soon as possible, and Bill rowed us back to our dwelling, where we were glad to take a few hours' rest, before a new day brought us fresh cares and fresh anxieties.

CHAPTER XXIV.

Important resolutions are taken, and plans formed.

The sun already stood high in the heavens when we met for breakfast. Then for the first time I noticed that the roses on Anne's cheeks had faded sadly during the past weeks. Not only did she look ill, but there was a strange restlessness about her that I did not at all like; she seemed unable to sit still, her fingers were always at work on something, and in talking she passed from subject to subject incessantly. Yet she would not allow that there was anything the matter with her, only she had slept very badly, she said. All would be well if only she could be assured through uncle Remy of her grandmother's and sister's forgiveness. Consequently I told both Bellamy and Babington that the very best thing for her would be to pass a few weeks in the seclusion of Woxindon; in fact her health required it. The former said directly that he would take his niece back with him, and the latter, after some persuasion on our part, gave his consent. We agreed, however, that Uncle Remy should go down first and apprise his mother of our intention, and that Anne should follow under our escort on the morrow. Woxindon would only be a halting place for me on my way back to Chartley.

Bellamy set off betimes on his homeward ride, and Anne, at my suggestion, retired to rest awhile, to make amends for the preceding night. I availed

myself of the opportunity thus afforded me, to question Babington about Savage and his murderous project.

He told me he had made the man's acquaintance through Pooley, who displayed the greatest sympathy for the Queen of Scots, and had disclosed to Babington many of Walsingham's secrets. I here made the remark that he ought to be careful how he trusted Pooley, for a man who is not true to his master will not be true to his friend. Babington answered that he had taken the precaution to make inquiries through Nau, of Mary Stuart herself, to whom Pooley had referred him, as to whether the man was trustworthy, and had had the most satisfactory assurances in reply. For himself he was more and more convinced that Walsingham was desirous that Mary should be set at liberty, and that was why he had appointed me as her physician. He believed too that it was with Walsingham's consent that Pooley told him what he did, albeit he was obliged to appear to know nothing whatsoever of our plans.

"I was introduced to Savage some two months back," he continued, "in the *Paris Garden*, as being a wonderful good shot. I pique myself on being no mean proficient in that line, but on competing with him, I found that my skill was nothing in comparison with his. Pooley left us together, and we were joined presently by Gifford, whom the French ambassador has entrusted with the task of conveying all our correspondence to the Scottish Queen. He told me that Savage was the very man for us; he was a zealous adherent of the Catholic

cause, and would gladly join our conspiracy. I therefore invited the sinister-looking man to my rooms, saying I wanted to show him some new pistols of Spanish workmanship and to speak a word with him in confidence. He came, and over a bottle of choice Alicante his tongue was loosed. What was the use, he said, of complaining about the sad condition of Catholics in England? The time had come to act; the Pope himself had declared that Anne Boleyn's daughter was not our rightful sovereign. I reminded him of the disastrous termination of the uprising in the north; he answered that the blow had been struck in the wrong place. 'A single bullet from the mouth of this pistol in the heart of the right individual would rescue England from the shameful tyranny of this bastard, and our holy faith from being trampled on by the heretics.'

I could no longer fail to understand his meaning, and upon my honour, I did my best to dissuade him from attempting such a crime. All was in vain. He is firmly convinced that he is chosen by Heaven to be an instrument of its vengeance, and the liberator of the Church of God; and would gladly die the cruellest death if he could only first succeed in inflicting on Elizabeth the fate she deserves."

"He told me," Babington continued, "that he was a soldier of fortune who had served for several years in the Netherlands. Having lost family and home and property in the religious wars, nothing remained to him but his sword; and he thought he could not employ it better than by fighting against

the heretics under Parma. Embittered by brooding over his misfortunes, and exasperated by certain Scottish comrades in the camp, who reproached the English Catholics for their cowardice in submitting to be tyrannized over by a woman, he had become possessed with the idea that to take the life of one who used her power to such ill purpose, and who had, in fact no right claim to the sceptre she wielded, would be a good and laudable action, which Heaven would approve. He related to me that, on one occasion, after long hesitation, he distinctly heard a voice bidding him do the deed he contemplated, and that many remarkable coincidences had confirmed him in his resolution. Finding all persuasions powerless to deter him from the deed, what was I to do?''

''Inform against him instantly,'' Tichbourne answered.

''I could not bring a man to the gallows, for what he told me in confidence,'' Babington rejoined. ''I did threaten him with it, but I saw from the strange, wild look in his eye that if I persisted, he would not scruple to take a speedy means of preventing betrayal. So I changed my tactics, and suggested another argument; had it not occurred to him, I said, that the assassination of Elizabeth, so long as Mary Stuart was in the power of her enemies, would provoke her immediate death at the hands of her warder, by way of reprisals; and thus he would destroy a life he meant to spare, and defeat the hopes of all of us Catholics? This staggered him for a time; then he said: 'God can protect her; I must keep my oath.' Nothing

remained for me but to reveal to him, after swearing him to secrecy, the existence of our association for the liberation of the Queen of Scots, the arrangements for which were so far advanced, that we might reasonably hope to execute our project before many weeks had elapsed. Finally I induced him to give me his word of honour that he would do nothing until Mary Stuart had been removed to a place of safety. That is all that I have had to do with Savage."

Tichbourne and I could not but approve of Babington's conduct in regard to this affair. We resolved that Savage's project should not be mixed up in any way with ours, nor should he be admitted into our association. Not a word should be said about his proposal at our meeting that evening; above all, there was not to be a hint of it in any communication to the captive Queen. I then talked about my sojourn at Chartley, and my royal patient, describing her gentleness and patience in such eloquent language, that my hearers were quite touched. Before separating, we promised to be at the *Blue Boar* in St. Giles in good time that evening.

In the afternoon I paid my promised visit to the good boatman's sick daughter. The poor child was in her lonely garret; the first glance was enough to tell me that the disease had entered upon a new stage, and that she could not live many weeks more. But she was in good spirits, and said that if only her cough and the fever would let her rest at night, she should soon be better. Her appetite was not bad, and people told her she was

getting quite a nice colour. Alas! she knew not that it was not the glow of health upon her cheek, but the hectic flush of consumption! As I sat a while by her side, looking out upon the boats plying to and fro upon the river, the sight of the still, turbid waters, hurrying by, and the presence of one on whose features Death had already set its mark, made on me a most melancholy impression. I could not help reflecting how near my own end might be; nearer perhaps, than that of the sick girl whose days I knew were numbered. My patient perceived my altered mood, and asked, was I not going to repeat some of those consoling prayers with which I had frequently comforted her on my previous visits?

Right willingly I complied with her request; and while I was reciting some acts of contrition, of charity, of hope, the father entered. He knelt down by the door, and folded his hands; when I had ended, I noticed that as he rose from his knees he wiped away a tear with the sleeve of his coat. "That is the way people used to pray when I was a child, sir," he said as he came forward," in the days when Chancellor More and Bishop Fisher laid their heads on the block. Under the new order of things we have no such prayers, and ministers now-a-days do not visit the poor when they are in trouble, as the old clergy did, whom people now call Priests of Baal."

I bade my patient farewell, leaving with her a bottle of Muscatel wine, which I had brought, as being the best medicine she could have; the father accompanied me down the narrow stair-

case. On reaching the room below, he anxiously inquired how I thought his daughter was? I did not conceal from him, that humanly speaking, there was no hope of her recovery; with careful nursing, however, she might linger some time yet. Then I slipt a sovereign into his hand, in acknowledgement of his services on the foregoing night; but he would not hear of taking it, saying that my great kindness to his child gave me a claim to anything he could do. He then asked me, if we still thought of rescuing Mr. Bellamy from prison. If so, there was a capital opportunity just then, for there was a smart cutter lying at anchor near Gravesend, which was to sail for Dunkirk in a week's time, The captain, a friend of his, was always willing, for a small remuneration, to carry a persecuted Papist, for whom he had an excellent place of concealment on board. He was acquainted too, with one of the warders of the Clink, who for a few soft words and a few pieces of gold, would undertake to put a rope and a file handy for the prisoner. Knowing as I did what joy the liberation of Uncle Robert would give to my friends at Woxindon, I gladly accepted Bell's proposal, and provided him with a sum of money to make all necessary arrangements. On the morrow, or at any rate, the day after next, I would send him a definite answer. So I left St. Catharine's docks with a light heart and full of hope, little thinking under what circumstances I should again seek the shelter of the worthy boatman's roof.

I reached the *Blue Boar* at St. Giles' betimes that same afternoon. The evening breeze was

rustling in the tops of the old and leafy oaks before the tavern, while the ground below was strewn with branches and twigs torn and broken by the violence of the storm on the preceding evening.

On the threshold stood old Clayton, his portly form filling up the doorway. I thought he greeted me in a less friendly and jovial a manner than usual, and he begged to have a word with me before I went upstairs. So he conducted me into a little private room behind the guest room, and after looking through a spy-hole to see that no one was near enough to hear what was said, be began, with some hesitation, to say how much he respected Tichbourne and myself, and he begged we would not take offence, if he ventured to say a word of warning about Babington, who, though doubtless he meant no harm, brought to the house comrades of whom he, the host, could not but regard with suspicion. Would I just look through the spy-hole; there sat three black-browed boon companions. The one who was just setting down the tankard, was a certain Savage; the names of the other two were Travers and Charnock; they were all old soldiers who had served together under Parma. The man at the other table gave himself out for a recruiting sergeant, and called himself Fortescue; the one with a feather in his hat and silver braid on his gray cloak, but it was whispered about that he was something very different, and a Spanish spy to boot. His two companions were Pooley, an agent of Walsingham's, a cunning rogue; and Gifford,

one of the most dissolute fellows imaginable, a regular gallowsbird, but who could cast up his eyes and quote texts from the Bible as well as any of the sour-visaged preachers who came over from Geneva.

"These are the people," old Clayton concluded, "whom Mr. Babington takes for his confidential companions, whose reckoning he pays, and by whom, I am sorely afraid, he has got entangled in some discreditable business. Pooley sticks to him like a pet dog, and, I have little doubt, carries everything to his master, Walsingham. Well, I must leave it to you, sir, whether after what I have told you, you will go upstairs or no. In your place I would break off at once with a friend who has such suspicious comrades, for in these dangerous times many a man has got into sad trouble through his friend's friends, ay, and has in this way made unpleasant acquaintance with Topcliffe, her Majesty's chief executioner."

I could not help seeing that Clayton meant what he said, and said it with the best of intentions. I shook hands with him, telling him I should always feel grateful to him for his kindness in thus warning me, but I did not think he need be uneasy about Babington, as he knew better than to do anything unworthy of a Christian or of an English gentleman. Certainly his associates were very undesirable companions, and I would take the first opportunity of speaking seriously to him about them. I did not, however, think there was sufficient reason for me to absent myself from the meeting of my comrades that evening, so he must not take it amiss if I joined them all the same.

The old man looked disappointed, as he answered: "Very well, you must do as you please. Only do me the justice to acknowledge that, if you get into trouble, as I fear you cannot fail to do, it has not been for lack of warning on my part." Then he bowed low, and opened the door for me.

Upstairs I found all my friends assembled, and there was an interchange of salutations and merry chatter, such as one cannot blame young people for indulging in, even in times of public calamity. We sat down to table, and thoroughly enjoyed our evening meal; not till the dishes had been removed and the wine placed before us, did Babington begin to speak of the project we all had at heart. He had been by no means inactive since we saw him last; he had purchased or hired a considerable number of riding-horses, which he had placed in charge of trustworthy persons in Staffordshire and Derbyshire, and had obtained promises of assistance from a good many of the gentry resident in the neighbourhood of his home. Of his own retainers at Dethick he could reckon upon a hundred men at least; this he thought would suffice for the liberation of the Queen. Of money and arms there was a plentiful supply. Then taking a map of the counties of Stafford and Derby, he showed us how he had distributed his men and horses within a radius of 30 to 50 miles around Chartley, and we all expressed our commendation of the arrangements he had made. Thus, whenever I should send a messenger to Lichfield, where he fixed his headquarters, on the following night the horsemen could all meet in Chartley Wood.

After Babington had told us what he had done, Salisbury and Barnewell related their adventures in Lancashire. They could not say enough about the great number of Catholics in that county; and the detestation which the proceedings of the government had aroused. The little town of Prescot was entirely Catholic, and were Mary Stuart once in Lancashire, there would be little doubt of her rescue. In fact they thought very little would be needed to cause an insurrection of the people. For the present they had secured safe quarters as far as Formby, where Barnewell had engaged a trusty skipper, who from St. James' Day until the Feast of the Ascension, would be in readiness any night, if wind and tide allowed, to set sail for the French coast.

Then my turn came to speak, and I described minutely the plan of the castle and its situation. If a *coup-de-main* was to be attempted, I said it would be necessary first of all to overpower Sir Amias Paulet, either by force or fraud, otherwise he would certainly not hesitate to lay hands on his prisoner, before we could reach her apartments. But if once we had the crabbed old knight in our custody, all the carefully closed bars and bolts, the keys of which were always in his possession, carried at his belt, would serve to keep the other warders of the castle at bay, until such time as the men-at-arms could come up from the adjoining wood. What I proposed then was this: On one of the days on which I paid my customary visits to the Queen, I would take with me one of my comrades, Donne for instance, who

had a strong and ready arm, under the guise of an assistant surgeon. The porter would admit us without any difficulty, for I should say that my patient required cupping. We would arrange so as to go in just before the brewer's dray from Burton, which we could see coming in the distance, should drive up, when the great gates would be thrown open. At that moment two others, say Salisbury and Barnewell, must gallop up, and just as the cart had passed through the gateway, cut the traces, so that the gates could not be closed again. In the meantime my companion and I would have reached the apartment where Sir Amias would be awaiting my arrival at the appointed hour. He would be sure to make objections to my taking a surgeon in with me. But before he could look around, we would have overpowered him, bound and gagged him, and taken his bunch of keys from his side. Our friends in the courtyard would, it is true, be left to grapple with the men on guard, but there were not many, and they would be taken by surprise. Besides a pistol shot would summon Babington and his followers from the wood, where they lay in ambush; the guard would be outnumbered, and it would be easy to carry off the Queen to the secluded cottage of a forrester, on whom I could perfectly rely, where she could remain provisionally.

My friends were all delighted with my plan. Only Babington protested against the part I had assigned to him, saying that to him as leader of the enterprise the post of danger by right belonged, and he must either accompany me to Sir

Amias' presence, or be one of the party of attack at the gateway, where there would be a risk of his life. After a good deal of discussion, it was settled that he and Salisbury should undertake to arrest the progress of the dray. We arranged also that the honest brewer should be induced on the strength of a gold noble, not to drive off from the *Mayflower* until he saw Donne and myself going into the castle, so as to leave time for us to make our way to the room where the old knight was, and possess ourselves of his person.

Thus the whole plot was finally determined upon in every detail. One point I urged very strongly that it should be carried out in the course of the next week, or at any rate, in the one following, since delay in the execution of a project which so many persons knew of must needs be dangerous. But I was overruled by Babington, who insisted on writing first to the Queen, and expounding the plan of rescue for her approval; he told us, his confessor, Father John Ballard, an excellent and zealous man, had enjoined upon him to do so. None of us thought this advisable; Babington however was not to be deterred from his purpose; the letter, he said, should be in cipher, and worded so cautiously that no harm could possibly come of it. Nor was there any fear that the plot would get about, for besides our six selves, not a soul knew anything about the time and manner of its execution, except Gilbert Gifford, who had been most highly spoken of by Morgan and other friends in Paris. And thus ended our last symposium at St. Giles!

While we were conversing, the flagon had frequently been passed round, and doubtless the good Spanish wine had something to do with our high spirits, for we parted in a merrier mood than had been the case ever since we pledged ourselves to set the royal captive free. How differently we should have felt, could we have foreseen what would happen at St. Giles eight weeks later! But a merciful God has seen fit to hide the future from the eyes of mortals.

Nescia mens hominum fati sortisque futurae!

CHAPTER XXV.

My Wife tells how two fugitives arrived at Woxindon, and a solemn festival was held beneath the branches of the wonderful flower.

My good husband says it is time that I should resume the part of narrator, since I have already been silent for a longer period than is consistent with the love of talking with which he credits my sex. I will therefore proceed with my story, and narrate the events which occurred on the eve of St. Peter and St. Paul, after the departure from Woxindon of my Uncle Remy, with Windsor, my affianced husband.

As soon as they had ridden off, I went up to the top of the watch-tower, whence I could follow them in thought, when they had passed out of sight, accompanying them with earnest wishes for their success in dealing with my poor sister Anne. As I think I said once before, I loved to linger in that solitary place, to think of my friends on earth, and raise my heart to Heaven. But I was alarmed to see the threatening aspect of the sky over the wood in the direction of Putney, and I ran back to the house to warn the servants, and direct them to close the shutters on the side of the house where the rain was coming up, before the outburst of the storm that I saw approaching. The violence with which it broke over the city has been described by my husband. When the first gusts began to sway to and fro the tops of the beeches, to howl in the chimneys, and to make the rusty vanes on the

housetop clatter and scream, as they twirled about in the eddying blast, I went into my grandmother's room, for I used to be very nervous of a storm, and did not like to be alone.

The pious old lady had already lighted the blest candles, and laid her prayerbook open at the place of the prayers to be said in the time of a tempest, imploring the protection of Almighty God and the good Angels for house and field, against the fury of the elements and the powers of evil spirits. And when the first peals of thunder filled the air, and the flashes of lightning began to follow one another in quick succession, she pushed the book towards me, and made me a sign to recite the words of supplication and hope.

Just when the storm was at its height, and a perfect deluge of rain and hailstones was dashing against the closed shutters, we heard a knocking at the house door. Wondering who ever could be asking hospitality in such terrible weather, I hastened down to the door with old John, for he would not believe me when I said there was somebody there. The visitor proved to be none other than good Father Weston, who had been standing there for some time, unable to make us hear through the roaring of the wind and rumbling of the thunder. His patience, however, was unruffled; he said it did not matter in the least, for it was impossible to be more drenched than he was when he first came to the door. I took him upstairs immediately and gave him a suit of my uncle's; clad in which he soon made his appearance in my grandmother's presence, and gave us all his blessing.

Meanwhile old John had bestirred himself to bring something to eat, for he knew right well that the priests, hunted down mercilessly as they were by the pursuivants, often went for whole days without food. Whilst taking some refreshment, of which he appeared very glad, Father Weston told us of some of the hairbreadth escapes from falling into the hands of his pursuers, which he had had since he left us in the end of April. Some of them were nothing short of miraculous. He said once he had stood the whole night long in the Thames, with the water up to his neck, screened from sight by a drooping willow-tree, while Topcliffe and his troop, with bloodhounds searched the great park at Henley, where for some time he had been hidden in a summerhouse. "So you see," he said, turning to me with a smile, "you need not compassionate me for being wet through with the rain, in an ordinary manner; I have got accustomed to such trifling disagreeables."

As we sat talking, the knocker was heard again, and this time with loud and impatient strokes. We started to our feet, doubting not that the pursuivants were again on the track of the fugitive priest. Thrusting into his pockets, bread, meat and a bottle of wine, we hurried him away to the hiding place beneath the back staircase, of which mention has already been made. I then sent one of the maids to put out of sight the wet clothes he had taken off, as they might give evidence that he was here, and finally I descended the stairs, at no very quick pace, accompanied by Uncle Barthy and old John, to see who was battering the door

with the heavy iron knocker, as though with the design of breaking it in.

But when I opened the little wicket to inquire, what a joyful surprise awaited me! For who should answer me but my little brother Frith, telling me he should have beaten in the door long ago, if he had been strong enough, for it was not too pleasant to be kept standing outside his own father's house with a gentle young lady in such weather as that.

The bolts were speedily drawn back, the heavy chains unhooked, and the door was thrown open wide. I then saw a young lady of distinguished appearance and modest, pleasing demeanour standing beside Frith. Her dress, which was of costly material, was dripping with the rain to which she had been exposed. Before I could address a word to her, Master Frith, all wet as he was, flung his arms round my neck, and poured out a string of questions of which not the least important regarded the welfare of his grey pony. "Fie, fie," I said, chiding him gently, "you will put me in as sorry a plight as yourself, you dear, bad boy," and at last he let me go, so that I could turn to his companion.

The young lady stood by, smiling at the warm, but somewhat inopportune demonstrations of affection showered on me. Her countenance was pale, but pleasing, and the expression of her large dark eyes was very grave. "Miss Bellamy," she said, "may the unhappy daughter of one of the enemies of your faith venture to crave your hospitality?"

"Miss Cecil!" I exclaimed, taking both her hands and leading her into the house, "welcome,

welcome to Woxindon! I have heard how good you have been to my brother Frith at Court. But for Heaven's sake, what brings you here in this weather?''

''I have fled from the Queen's wrath,'' Lord Burghley's daughter responded, as I conducted her upstairs to my own chamber, where she could take off her wet things. She was rather taller and stouter than I was, but yet my dresses fitted her very fairly, for at Woxindon we kept to the old English costume, and had not adopted the new Franco-Spanish fashions of tight bodices and waists pinched in, which were in vogue at Court. In half an hour's time I took her downstairs to the room where my grandmother was sitting, listening to Frith's story. Good Father Weston, who had been fetched out of the hiding place, occupied an arm-chair on the opposite side of the hearth.

When Lord Burghley's daughter entered, they both came forward to greet her with great cordiality, grandmother giving her a motherly embrace, and refusing to listen to her apologies and deprecatory speeches, saying there would be plenty of time for all that when she had had rest and refreshment. When she was introduced to Father Weston, I noticed that our visitor looked at him with some embarrassment, if not timidity, for like many protestants, she had a dread of Catholic priests, and especially of Jesuits. But she quickly recovered herself, and we gathered amicably around the supper-table.

Our repast ended, Miss Cecil, not without incessant interruption on Frith's part, told us the story of how she had long doubted the truth of the

new doctrines, but had been unable to come to any decision on matters of faith, because there was so much in the teaching of the Catholic Church that appeared to her strange and incomprehensible. While she was in this state of perplexity, she had learnt a great deal from her little friend Frith, who, she really believed, had been sent to Court by God in answer to her prayers for enlightenment. Oftentimes she had overheard him disputing with the other pages on religious questions, and had been struck by the force of his answers, which fully refused the objections brought by Calvin and his followers against the most prominent dogmas of Catholicism.

Here Frith broke in. "As for that," he said, "you cannot think how stupid the pages were. Just fancy, grandmother, what rubbish one of them talked to me. He said a reformed preacher one day came to a Catholic priest, and said: Here is a poisoned Host: If you really believe what you assert, that the formula you utter has the power to change the wafer into the Body of Christ, you will not hesitate to consecrate and consume it. Then we shall see whether you are right or wrong. For if the transubstantiation you talk of actually takes place, it will do you no harm; but if, as I maintain, it remains unchanged — well, you must take the consequences. The priest would not do what the minister proposed, and so they said, as he would not agree to this test, it was as plain as day that he did not believe in transubstantiation." [1])

[1]) It is hardly credible, but quite true, that this absurd argument was put forward in one of the German Protestant tracts distributed to the wounded Catholic soldiers during the war of 1870.

"The boy only repeated what the learned Dean of St. Paul's said from the pulpit of the Chapel Royal on the preceding Sunday," interposed Miss Cecil.

"Well, what answer did you make to this cunningly devised argument?" asked Father Weston, who was listening attentively to the conversation.

"The answer was easy enough" replied Frith. "I said our Lord gave His priests power to change bread, but not poison, into His Body."

"Bravo! my fine fellow, you shall have the best picture I can find for that answer," rejoined the priest. "What did the others say to that?"

"Oh, nothing worth listening to. They talked loud, and said all sorts of blasphemous things, and they cuffed me, and boxed my ears, and I came off badly for they were twenty to my one. But I took the odds out of big Essex, who was the first to strike me, for I knocked out one of his teeth. This occasioned such an uproar that the Queen herself rushed out of her apartments, and slapped our faces lustily with her own royal hand. The others all cried out that I, the Papist, was alone to blame, and the Queen ordered the master of the pages to put me on bread and water for a day, and administer castigation with the birchrod. It would have fared ill with me but for Miss Cecil's kindness, she interceded for me and sent me a famous slice of cake that same evening."

Miss Cecil then went on to say that after this occurrence she frequently talked to Frith about her religious difficulties, and that he almost invariably gave her a satisfactory answer.

"Grandmother, I only repeated what you or my sister had taught me at catechism," the boy interposed.

In this manner Lord Burghley's daughter gradually became more and more convinced that the truth pure and undefiled was only to be found in the Catholic Church; and she resolved, with God's grace, to return to the true fold. Yet perhaps she would have lacked courage to acquaint her royal mistress and her father with the step she contemplated taking, had not circumstances obliged her to come to a decision. The Queen had long suspected that she thought of becoming a Catholic, and had threatened her with not the withdrawal of her royal favour alone, but with lifelong imprisonment in the Tower. Only two years before, the Earl of Arundel, Philip Howard, had been immured in the Beauchamp Tower, with no hope of release unless he consented to abjure the Catholic faith.[1]) "The day before yesterday," she said, "one of the pages overheard me talking about purgatory with Frith."

"It was that spiteful Essex, who could not forgive me for breaking his tooth," said Frith.

"Shortly after we were both summoned to the Queen's presence. She was in a very bad temper, as is often the case, now that she is getting old; besides the new French sempstress whom Catharine of Medici sent at her request, had not made a gown to her liking. She asked us in no very pleasant manner, whether we did not know that every one at

[1]) Cf. Life of Father Weston, in Troubles of our Catholic Forefathers. Series II. p. 91.

her Court must hold the same religious belief as herself? She was the Supreme Head of the Church in England, and she required us to reject the Popish superstition about purgatory, of which not a word was to be found in the Bible. I did not know what to answer, but my little friend was by no means abashed. With more candour than prudence, he boldly replied, that he should be very sorry not to believe in a place of purgatory, as there was but one Heaven and one hell, and Holy Scripture declared that nothing unclean could enter Heaven. According to the new doctrine, almost every one must go to hell, for not many people were so free from sin and guilt at their death, that they could go straight to Heaven. Then the Queen said one drop of the Saviour's blood was enough to wash away the guilt of sin. 'Yes,' the boy replied, 'in this life. But when sin is forgiven, the penalty is not done away with. King David suffered punishment for his sin, although it had been pardoned.' Elizabeth grew furious at being contradicted. 'What,' she almost screamed, 'do you say I should not go straight to Heaven?' To my horror, Frith gravely shook his head and answered: 'Your Majesty must know best about that. But I should wish for you to make a good confession before death.' 'And without that I should go to purgatory?' continued the Queen. 'I fear not,' the boy replied.

Then Elizabeth was so exasperated that she would have struck the child, had not some of the lords interposed, and said doubtless it was a slip of the tongue, and he meant to say 'I hope not.' They had some difficulty in pacifying her, and

Frith was delivered over to the jailer to receive a sound caning. I tried to slip away unnoticed, but the Queen sent word to me that on the next day, when the Court was to remove to Windsor, I must either give her an unequivocal assurance of my adhesion to the Reformed religion, or be consigned to the Tower. Her Secretary Davidson should inform my father immediately of what had occurred.

I felt that the time for action had come. There was nothing for me but to seek safety in flight, and Frith too, must not be left at the Queen's mercy. So during the night I collected all my jewels together, and cut off all the pearls and precious stones which were, after the extravagant fashion of the day, sewn upon the stomacher of my Court dresses. They would, I thought, furnish me with the means of escaping to the Continent, where I could live in seclusion and in peace. I also wrote to my father telling him what I was doing for conscience's sake, and bidding him farewell. I said much the same in a few lines addressed to her Majesty.

The next morning in the bustle and confusion of the preparations for removal, we two culprits were not thought of. This just coincided with my plans. No sooner had the Queen left the Palace, than I went to the jailer who knew me well by sight, and saying that the Page Bellamy had orders to accompany me, obtained Frith's release. Poor boy! he forgot his sore back in the joy of being again free, and on his way home, when he only thought severer punishments were in store for him."

Then Frith in his turn, related how they walked through the park together, how they were ferried over the river at Putney, dined at the *Golden Ball*, and finally asked their way across the fields to Woxindon. They had not long entered St. John's Wood before the tempest began, and such was the violence of wind and rain, thunder and lightning, that they almost despaired of reaching the house.

We congratulated them heartily on their escape from the fury of the elements. But presently it occured to grandmother, and to Father Weston likewise, that a far worse storm than that which was still raging around our walls, would soon burst over the two fugitives, and that its most formidable thunderbolts would be directed against Woxindon. Father Weston inquired of Miss Cecil when she thought the report of her flight would reach the ears of the Queen and of her father. She replied that the Queen would most likely hear of it at Windsor next evening, and her father perhaps on the day after.

"If that be so," continued Father Weston, "in all probability, before two days are past, Lord Burghley, or his representative, will be down on us with a swarm of pursuivants. Before that time therefore, we must contrive that you, Miss Cecil, and my young friend here, and myself, should be in some place of safety, as far distant as possible. We will rest to-night and to-morrow, and when evening comes again, we must start anew on our wanderings."

Miss Cecil began to apologize for the trouble her coming had caused us, but grandmother, cutting her short, proposed that the young lady and the child should be concealed in the house, or in the ruined Castle, without going further afield. But the Jesuit negatived this decisively, saying that as it was a question of discovering Lord Burghley's daughter, the house would be more thoroughly and systematically searched than it ever had been before. We could not deny the justice of what he said.

Then Miss Cecil turned to him and said: "Reverend Father, I cannot doubt that it is the hand of an all-merciful God which has led me to Woxindon while you are here. I do not know when I may have another opportunity of speaking to a Catholic priest, or what may befall me, in these troublous times. I beg you therefore, in your charity to regard me as your daughter, and if you see fit, to receive me into the Catholic Church."

We were deeply touched and greatly consoled by this request. Father Weston declared himself only too happy to render her any assistance, and asked her if there was any point of Catholic doctrine upon which she still had doubts. On her answering, not one, he told her that she had better prepare herself at once for confession; he would then receive her into the Church, and the next morning at an early hour she could hear mass and receive Holy Communion. To this she agreed, but I could see that she felt great apprehension at the prospect of making her confession, as is always the case with adults who go to confession for the first time, and have never experienced the solace this

Sacrament of Penance brings to the souls of those who approach it.

When Frith heard that Miss Cecil was to make her First Communion on the morrow, he pleaded earnestly that the like happiness might be granted to him also. Although grandmother would have preferred a longer time of preparation for him, yet at Uncle Barthy's and my request she allowed us to refer the decision to Father Weston. To our great delight he assented readily to our petition, as he considered the boy's courageous defence of his faith proved him to be sufficiently prepared.

Then Father Weston gave us a beautiful instruction on the Sacrament of Penance, dwelling on the fact that it was instituted by the Saviour on the day of His glorious Ascension, as the most inestimable and richest means of grace that he could bestow upon His people. "For, when during that first Eastertide He came and stood in the midst of His Apostles, the doors being shut, and showed them the wounds in His hands and in His side, the price and pledge of the forgiveness of sins, twice He greeted them with the words: "Peace be to you". And He said: "As the Father hath sent me, so send I you." And when He had said this, He breathed on them; and He said to them: "Receive ye the Holy Ghost. Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them; and whose sins ye shall retain, they are retained." (St. John XX. 21, 22, 23.) With such unction did the good Father expound these words that Miss Cecil's tears flowed freely at the thought of the goodness of the Saviour in bequeathing to His priests this divine power of

forgiveness. Fr. Weston then helped us to examine our conscience, and awaken contrition and resolution of amendment, after which he heard us in confession one after the other.

When this was over, he addressed all together once more, taking Holy Communion for his subject; and then, as it was already late, we separated for the night.

Soon after daybreak, I arranged the altar in the attic chamber, where the wonderful plant, whose blossoms had given place to five scarlet berries, hung down from the rafters, and decorated it with beauteous flowers. Then I fetched Miss Cecil, to whom I had lent a white veil for the occasion. We were soon joined by Frith, who had scarcely slept for excitement, and who was to serve the mass. Presently in the stillness of the early morning, the Holy Sacrifice was offered, and our Blessed Lord, the source of all grace, hidden under the sacramental veil, vouchsafed to come and dwell in the hearts of those who were prepared to receive him as their guest. This sacred Presence brought to us in the fulness of His mercy and loving kindness, consolation for past sorrows, strength for coming trials, and the confident hope of an eternal reward.

CHAPTER XXVI.

A sorrowful parting, and a venturesome flight.

After some time spent in recollection and silent prayer, we assembled in the hall for breakfast. I wanted to take Miss Cecil into the garden, and show her Woxindon, but Father Weston put a veto upon this proposal, saying it was not without design, Providence had arranged that the two fugitives should come to us unperceived, under cover of the storm, and we must not unnecessarily expose them to observation. Grandmother said the same; accordingly we agreed to remain within doors. This was no small privation for Frith, for the cherries were ripe on the tree by the wall, and his grey pony was in the stable close by; but he acquiesced without a murmur in the wishes of his elders.

We then began seriously to deliberate upon the best means of placing our two fugitives beyond the reach of danger. Father Weston declared that nowhere in England would they be secure permanently, for it was obvious that the Queen and Lord Burghley would move heaven and earth to get Miss Cecil again into their power. It would therefore be advisable for them to cross the seas as soon as possible. He offered to furnish the boy with letters which would ensure his reception in one of the Jesuit colleges in France, or in Switzerland, where the celebrated Canisius had just opened a school in Freiburg. Miss Cecil might find a home in some Convent in Brussels or elsewhere, or if she

preferred, he would use his influence to procure for her the part of maid of honour at some Catholic Court. Until an opportunity for crossing the channel was found, he proposed to take them to Henley, where Lady Sturton was always ready to show hospitality to persecuted Catholics.

While we were discussing our plans, Uncle Remy suddenly came in, bringing the welcome news that Anne was desirous of returning to her parents' house. We regarded it as a truly providential circumstance, that on the very day of Frith's and Miss Cecil's First Communion, this consolation should be afforded us; and we scolded my uncle for not having brought her with him, as he knew she would be received with open arms. So he had told Anne, Uncle Remy replied; but the poor child was so downhearted about her fault, and really so far from well, that he could not persuade her to accompany him. It was agreed forthwith that in the afternoon I should ride to London with Uncle Barty, to assure my repentent sister of full forgiveness, and bring her to Woxindon. Grandmother promised to go as far as the cross roads to meet her, like the father of the Prodigal, who did not wait for his son at the house door, but ran to meet him when he was yet afar off.

Soon after noon, accordingly, uncle and I started for the town, leading Frith's pony by a bridle rein, for Anne to ride back. Uncle Remy told us we should probably find her at Windsor's rooms in the Strand, and there in fact she was. I was shocked at her appearance, she looked so pale and haggard. As soon as she saw uncle and me,

she began to sob and accuse herself in a manner that would have melted a heart of stone, lamenting bitterly her rashness in contracting a marriage upon which her grandmother would not bestow a parental blessing.

We tried to console her with our sympathy, which is oftentimes the best, the only consolation that can be given. Uncle Barty was kindness itself, soothing and petting her like a child; finally we prevailed upon her to dress herself, and ride back with us to Woxindon. On passing through St. Giles we halted at the *Blue Boar*, for Anne knew that her husband was there with his friends; in fact they were just coming out of the hostelry when we drew bridle under the oaks.

My betrothed was the first to descry us, and he hastened up to greet me. Then he called Babington; it was impossible not to observe the reluctance with which the latter came towards us, on perceiving that I was there. But I kissed my hand to him, and when he began in rather a shamefaced manner to stammer some words of apology, I invited him to come with us to Woxindon. He declined, alleging more important engagements, but said he hoped on the morrow, or the day after, to make his excuses in person to Mistress Bellamy, if I would say a kind word for him in the interval. I was not sorry, for I preferred that the meeting with Anne should be got over first, especially as Miss Cecil was there. So Anne took leave of her husband, and we rode on, accompanied by my dear Windsor, who gave as a reason for joining our party that he had a communication of moment to

make to Uncle Remy. I need not say that I made no effort to dissuade him from coming.

The long summer day was drawing to a close when we reached the beech at the crossroads. There, sure enough, sat our dear old grandmother by the wayside, Uncle Remy standing beside her. I will not describe the scene that followed; the pardon which Anne besought was willingly granted; and as the stars came out one by one in the deepening twilight, it seemed as if the angels in heaven, who rejoice over the return of the repentent sinner, once more sang their song: Peace on earth to men of good will!

As we proceeded slowly homewards, Windsor informed Uncle Remy that his object in coming that evening, was to tell him that an excellent opportunity had unexpectedly presented itself to get poor Uncle Robert out of the Clink. He explained Bill Bell's proposal to us, and we clapped our hands with delight, exclaiming: "This is indeed a special interposition of Providence!" Then we in our turn, told him about Lord Burghley's daughter and Frith, and how Father Weston thought the sooner they could cross seas the better. If Uncle Robert were set free, the same vessel could carry them to France, and thus, as Uncle Remy said, we could kill two birds with one stone.

"I have another suggestion to make," Windsor said. "How would it be if my sweetheart were to accompany the fugitives. As I have already told you, I shall have to leave England within the next month, for an indefinite time, and I could then join Mary in Brussels or Cologne."

After a few moments' consideration, Uncle Remy replied that he saw no objection to this scheme. I opposed it, however, saying I could not bear to leave grandmother. But Windsor urged that sooner or later the parting must come, as I had promised to be his wife, and it was only a question of a few weeks. He gave such good reasons for my departure, that I was obliged to consent, although with a heavy heart, and on the condition that my grandmother's approval was gained.

We agreed not to mention the subject until after supper, for which we found the table already spread when we reached the house. As soon as thanks were returned, Windsor expounded his scheme. Grandmother, who had the greatest confidence in Father Weston's judgment, left to him the responsibility of deciding what it was best to do. The good Father asked several questions; presently, after a short prayer for divine guidance, he pronounced in favour of the plan. It was then arranged that Windsor should immediately return to London, and get everything in readiness to receive the fugitives in his house in the Strand. Uncle Remy meanwhile was to escort us through the wood to Putney, where he knew a fisherman, in whose boat he had often gone out on the river at night, harpooning fish by torchlight. In this boat he would row us to the riversteps at the end of Windsor's garden, where my betrothed would await us between one and two in the morning, before daybreak, that is.

This was no sooner said than done; for there was no time to be lost. I hurriedly put together

a few things; grandmother gave Frith and me her blessing, holding us clasped in a fond embrace. The farewells were heartrending; we had to tear ourselves away. Frith enjoined upon Anne to take good care of his pony, saying when the Queen was dead we should come back, as the child Jesus did when Herod was no more.

"Yes, children," said grandmother, "think of the flight into Egypt, and take for your companions Jesus, Mary and Joseph. May God and His good angels be with you!"

Again Uncle Remy warned us that time pressed; once more I embraced my grandmother and sister, and then the gate closed behind us. I turned to take one last look at Woxindon, whose turrets stood out darkly against the star-lit sky, before the trees of the wood we were entering, shut it out from sight. How bitter was my grief at that moment! May I not hope that God in his mercy will grant, that those who thus left house and home for His name's sake, will be received by Him into everlasting dwellings?

Scarcely a word was spoken as we rode through the wood; even little Frith was silent. When we drew near Putney, Father Weston parted from us as his course lay up the river to Henley.[1]) We

[1]) Father Weston, whose name will not again appear in these pages, fell into the hands of spies about a month later, and was consigned to the Clink. For seventeen years, until the end of Elizabeth's reign, he was dragged from one prison to another, and finally immured in one of the dungeons of the Tower. Broken in health, and almost blind, in May 1603 he was set at liberty; but compelled to leave the kingdom. He died at Valladolid in 1615, in the odour of sanctity. Cf. Life of Fr. Weston, Troubles of our Catholic forefathers. Series ii.

found the boat moored by the riverside, and Uncle Remy succeeded in making it loose. He made Miss Cecil and me crouch down in the bottom of the boat, while Frith took the rudderstrings, steering by uncle's directions. Not a syllable was uttered as we shot rapidly down the stream, aided by the current. We made it our aim to keep as much as possible in the middle of the river, and thus could scarcely distinguish anything on the banks. But as we passed Westminster, the moon came out from behind a cloud, and lit up the outlines of the Abbey. By its light Uncle Remy descried a barge, moored a short distance ahead of us, which he rightly devined to be that of the river watch. He begged Miss Cecil and me to lie down flat in the bottom of the boat, and over our prostrate forms he threw a dragnet, which was in the skiff. A few moments later a challenge rang out; uncle answered it. Almost immediately a boat came up alongside of us. "Any priests on board?" a gruff voice demanded.

"Not a man alive, save this lad and myself," was the reply.

"What have you got there in the bottom of the boat?"

"Nets, as you may see if you care to look."

"Well, well, give us a trifle, and we will let you pass."

Uncle handed over a gratuity; then he plied the oars vigorously and we glided swiftly onward. I heard the Westminster clock strike one; about a quarter of an hour later we stopped at the steps on the river bank. As soon as the boat was made

fast, I heard Windsor's voice asking where the ladies were? Uncle bade him to be silent; then he drew aside the dirty, unsavoury nets, and helped Miss Cecil and me to get up. A thick bank of clouds had come up before the moon, so that it was very dark on the river; in the space of a few moments we were safe indoors.

We found Tichbourne awaiting us. Some light refreshments were laid out on a table, and some mulled wine was prepared for us, of which we were very glad on coming in from the chilly night air.

Windsor had given up his room and helped old Barbara to get it ready for us girls, while a bed had been made up for Frith in Tichbourne's bedchamber. There Uncle Remy left us, for he had to take the boat he had borrowed back to Putney, but he promised, if possible, to come again in the evening, as the next night was to be that of our flight.

We then retired to rest, old Barbara showing us to our room, and very civilly offering her services to undress us. This however we declined, as we preferred to be alone.

The whole of the next day we kept ourselves carefully out of sight, much to the vexation of little Frith, who peeped longingly between the half closed shutters, now at the street and now on the river. The confinement was however less irksome to him than it otherwise would have been, on account of the weather, for the rain fell steadily all day long. When I complained to Windsor at having such horrible weather for our flight, he said, we could not be thankful enough for it. On such a night as this the Thames was as safe as the Rhine, and the

sentries on the Clink did not stir from their boxes. Had there been intervals of moonlight as there were yesternight, the venture would have been too hazardous to be attempted, and we need not fear a wetting, for Bill Bell would provide us with tarred capes and cloaks.

After supper we lay down for a brief rest. I fell into a sound sleep, from which I was startled by a knock at the door, warning us that it was time to start. Uncle Remy had come, bringing all manner of affectionate messages from Woxindon, where nothing had occurred since our departure. We were soon attired in oilskin cloaks, with sailor's hats on our heads, and such comical figures did we cut in this disguise, that, for all our grief and anguish of heart, we could not refrain from laughing at one another.

Just as the bell of St. Paul's tolled out the hour of midnight, the boatman's boy came to tell us his father was ready. We bade our host farewell; I promised to write to Windsor as soon as we reached Dunkirk. One last kiss, one last embrace, and out we went into the dark night and fast falling rain.

We two girls and Frith took our place in the bottom of the light skiff which our conductor had chosen for this expedition; the seats were reserved for the rowers, and the boatman's boy, a sharp youngster, took the rudderstrings. The necessity of preserving absolute silence having been duly impressed on us, we pushed off in the name of God, and drifted down alongside the bank until the frowning walls of the Clink were discernible through

the gloom. The footsteps of the patrol going his rounds were audible; we waited in breathless suspense until they had passed; then finding ourselves unobserved, with a few quick strokes of the oars, the skiff was brought close under the walls, below the fourth window.

Again we waited and listened; no sound was to be heard but the pattering of the rain and the rush of the water as it flowed past. Then up got Bill Bell, and taking a dark lantern from under the seat, opened it, and threw a ray of light on the roof of the prison, lowering it gradually till it shone full on one of the windows just under the eaves. A figure appeared at the window, removing one by one the iron bars which had been filed through. As the light fell upon his countenance, I recognized Uncle Robert; I could hardly repress a scream, when I saw him secure a rope to the bottom of the iron bars, throw the end down to us, and then clamber out through the aperture. Our men drew in the rope and held it tightly; the lantern was closed, and in a few moments, during which I held my breath in terrified apprehension, the prisoner slid down the rope and let himself noiselessly into the boat. We shook his hand without a word. The men resumed their seats, and taking up the oars, put off from the bank.

We now breathed freely, imagining all fear of discovery was past. Suddenly a warder, probably the one whom the boatman had bribed, anxious to avert suspicion from himself, raised the cry: "Turn out the guard! a prisoner has escaped! Help!"

"Shout yourself hoarse," muttered old Bell,

"it will not be easy to overtake us. Pull a long stroke and all together, we have a good quarter of an hour's start."

He gave Johnny a sign, the boat's head was turned, and until we were out of sight of the shouting warder, we made a feint of going up the river. But soon resuming our former direction, we shot down the stream like an arrow, propelled by four pairs of oars, tide and current both with us. Passing by on the opposite side, we saw lights moving to and fro outside the Clink, and some of the guard running down to the docks, where the boats lay. Swiftly we flew past the crowd of vessels anchored below London Bridge, past the gloomy walls of the Tower, where so many Confessors of the Faith were immured, past the outlying houses and the City Wall.

Now we thought it was safe to speak. But the boatman said there was still great need for caution. The rain and darkness which were so much in our favour at the Clink, were now just the reverse, for we might easily run upon a sandbank, or come into collision with one of the vessels waiting in midstream for the turn of the tide. He himself took the helm, and sent his boy into the bow, to keep a sharp lookout.

The first streak of light in the east, heralding the dawn of day, found us between Woolwich and Gravesend. The river was getting broader, the banks flatter; nothing was to be seen but water, sandy reaches, left bare at low tide, and on the banks a few stunted willows. When the tide began to flow, rowing became more difficult, but a

light breeze sprang up, our sail was hoisted, and we sped onwards to Gravesend.

As it was nearly light when we got there, Bill proposed that we should go ashore, and pass the day at a secluded tavern which he pointed out to us, as he thought it unsafe to go on board the *Jeanette* by daylight. The police were sure to come down before long, and make inquiries for the fugitives. We followed his advice, and lay hidden till evening, when he came and under cover of the darkness, took us on board the *Jeanette*.

"God who has helped us so far, will help us till the end," whispered my affianced husband, as he assisted me up the ship's ladder. I pressed his hand and followed the others in silence on to the deck. A few moments more, and the friendly skiff disappeared from our sight.

CHAPTER XXVII.

St. Barbe visits Mary Stuart, and gives a report of his proceedings to his Uncle Walsingham.

My friend Windsor desires me now to continue our story, and I will not deny that there is much that I can tell which ought not to be omitted from this eventful narrative.

The reader would not be greatly entertained were I to dwell upon the struggle that went on in my soul, distracted as it was by doubt. It is to my own humiliation and shame that I recall the resistance I offered to the truth, a resistance every day more culpable, as conviction was borne in upon me with greater force.

Walsingham's design in desiring me to take up my residence, as I did for a time, at Chartley, was that I might watch Windsor and the captive Queen. The more I saw of Windsor, the greater was the esteem I felt for him. He seemed to devote himself to the care of the sick poor, seeking no other recreation than a solitary walk, reading his favourite Virgil in the shade of some spreading tree, or angling in the Trent or the Dove. In fact he appeared to be the most pacific of mankind, and had I not known for certain that he was involved in Babington's plot, I should have thought him the last man to engage in anything of the sort. Nor did I ever hear of his being seen in the company of suspicious characters. He avoided me; this was only natural, as he could not but be aware that I

was there to play the spy on him, and put a spoke in his wheel, when opportunity offered.

Still greater was the esteem wherewith Mary Stuart inspired me. I had sought to stifle the admiration which her bounty to the poor exacted on the occasion of my first visit to Chartley, by persuading myself that she was actuated by motives of policy, or at least, by Popish ideas of selfrighteousness. But now, when I saw and talked to her almost daily, I was forced to acknowledge that her motives were of the most exalted character. Her patience and gentleness contrasted strikingly with Sir Amias Paulet's harsh, uncourteous behaviour; scarcely ever did a word of bitterness escape her lips, although the indisposition from which she suffered might have excused some amount of irritability. Nor, in spite of the humiliations to which she was subjected, did she ever lose the sense of her regal dignity. Of Elizabeth, her deadly enemy, she always spoke with moderation, repeatedly expressing the wish that she could have a personal interview with her, as she was certain that all the misunderstandings caused by third persons would then melt away like snow in the spring sunshine. She complained very much of her Royal Sister's persistant refusal to allow her this favour that she asked. Of my Uncle Walsingham she judged too leniently; perhaps from politeness towards myself, more probably because he had advocated her release. Burghley she regarded as her bitterest foe, and when his name was mentioned, begged me never to speak of him before her, as she found it almost impossible to forgive him for having lent

his weight to the Scottish rebels and murderers, to destroy her good name.

She related to me her whole history, from the time when, a child of six, she was taken to the French Court as the future bride of the Dauphin, there to spend twelve happy years, the only happy years of her life. She told me how she had, on the death of Queen Mary, as the heir to the crown, assumed the arms and title of Queen of England, thereby provoking Elizabeth's undying enmity; and how, a widow when scarcely eighteen, she left France to ascend the throne of Scotland, disturbed and in unruly times, when the hand of a young and inexperienced woman was singularly ill-fitted to take the helm of the State.

"I should have been treated with the greatest regard," she said, "had I consented to adopt the doctrines preached by Knox. But as I announced my determination to adhere to the Roman Catholic, the only true Church, Knox openly insulted and defied me, and in league with him and his fanatical preachers, the Lords of the Covenant never rested until they ruined my good name and saw me cast into prison. And yet I solemnly swore to respect the Reformed religion as then established, nor did I ever persecute one of my subjects on account of his creed."

She then proceeded to relate how her marriage with her cousin, Henry Darnley, had been a further cause of offence to Elizabeth; how she had proposed, in a constitutional manner, to establish the Catholic religion; how Darnley betrayed his royal consort, and caused Rizio, her secretary, who was conducting

the proceedings, to be assassinated in her very presence. How Darnley was deceived in his turn by the Covenanters, who refused him the reward of his treachery, the kingly power to which he aspired, and displayed to the Queen the document he had signed, in proof of the infamous part he had played. How she had, at his entreaty, freely forgiven him, refused to consent to a separation, and after his illness, been fully reconciled to him.

And then came the explosion which destroyed the house of Kirk-in-the-Field where Darnley was sleeping! Murray, Morton and Ruthven were accomplices in this murder; Bothwell was acquitted by his judges, and their verdict was confirmed by Parliament. "But suspicion still attached to him," the Queen said, "and therefore I steadfastly refused to marry him, despite the pressure brought to bear on me by a strong party of the Lords. Then he resorted to violence, carried me off to his castle at Dunbar, and compelled me to go through the ceremony which would give him the position of power he coveted. Would that I had died a thousand times rather than submit to it! For this compulsory marriage put a weapon in my adversaries' hands, and gave a colouring of truth to the vile accusation they brought against me of having connived at my husband's murder. Some forged letters were brought forward in support of this charge, and my fate was sealed. An insurrection of the Lords of the Covenant was followed by my incarceration at Lochleven and the complete abolition of the Catholic religion. After my escape from Lochleven with the aid of the brave George Douglas,

and the fatal defeat at Langside, I fled to England, where, as you know, instead of the promised assistance on which I relied, I found perpetual imprisonment in store for me. My principal enemies were, within a short time, arraigned before the judgment-seat of God; Murray was assassinated, Mar died suddenly, Morton and Ruthven were executed for the murder of Darnley, almost all met with a violent death; may God forgive them, as I strive to do! Only one thing is a source of continual anxiety to me; the salvation of my only son, whom I left, an infant in the cradle, when I was taken as a prisoner to Lochleven. To win him back to the Catholic faith, I would gladly sacrifice my life."

This sorrowful story, which was told me in detail, differed on many points from the account which I had previously heard. I cannot deny that I was deeply moved by it. Everything about it seemed to bear the impress of truth, and I said within myself, if this is a tissue of lies and hypocrisy, Mary Stuart is an accomplished deceiver, and I shall find the means of unmasking her. Should I discover her to be in any way mixed up in the design of murdering Elizabeth, not a single word will I believe of her self-defence, although it is stated so calmly, and bears so strong an appearance of truth.

The captive Queen did not tell me her history as a connected whole, but in parts, at different times, yet I never detected any discrepancy in her statements. Once I asked her what she would do if she were set at liberty. She replied that formerly

it was her design, should she regain her freedom, to hasten to Scotland, to withdraw her son from the influence of sycophants, and defeat their schemes; and to call upon the faithful Catholics in the lowlands, as well as the highland clans, to unite in one supreme effort to maintain the Catholic faith in the country. But now she had completely abandoned all such ideas; the time for action was past, her son was already 20 years of age. She would therefore retire to her beloved France, to her relatives of the House of Guise, to end her days in peace and the undisturbed exercise of her religion. Many and many a time had she besought her Royal Sister of England to release her from this almost intolerable captivity, but she would only consent to do so on certain conditions, two of which could not be accepted, namely that she renounce her claim to the crown of England, and abjure the Catholic faith. In the first she was now willing to acquiesce, as far as she was personally concerned, provided her royal rank was recognized and no obstacle placed in the way of the practice of her religion. The other was of course impossible.

I uttered a few words of encouragement, although I saw the block already prepared for her in prospect; alas, did I not myself aim at obtaining proofs of her guilt! The continual struggle that went on within me was most painful. Was she innocent or the contrary? Was her faith true or a delusion of the Evil one? Ought I to lend my aid to Windsor and Babington for the rescue of the Queen, or hand both her and them over to the executioner? What counsel should I give to Miss

Cecil? How were her doubts and my own to be solved? Was it not possible I might finally discover it to be my duty to return to the Church of my forefathers, and give in my adherence to doctrines which I had till now regarded as deadly error? Then all the frightful consequences of such a step rose up before my mind's eye in vivid colours; the loss of position, the loss of wealth, honours, high office, which the future had in store for me — exile from my country. No, a thousand times no! I exclaimed, I will not, cannot believe. It is all a lie, a delusion and a deceit!

This conflict went on within me for several weeks, during which I found no rest by day or night, for I had not recourse to the only means of relief, humble prayer for enlightenment and guidance. — I was heartily glad when towards the end of June, Gifford brought me a note from my uncle, requiring my presence in London. I preferred to start on my journey alone, rather than wait for Windsor, who was going a day later than myself, although on account of the insecurity of the roads, especially in the neighbourhood of the metropolis, the company of a fellow-traveler was generally accepted gladly. On my arrival, I betook myself immediately to my uncle's house.

He received me very kindly, but remarked upon my altered appearance, for I was looking thin and ill. This was owing to my mental unrest, but I told him I had not slept very well lately, and did not think Chartley a healthy place. He answered that he was all the more pleased that there would not be occasion for me to remain there much

longer, as matters must soon be brought to a climax. He then took me into his private room, and asked me a great many questions about the royal prisoner and her new physician, all of which I answered truthfully, to the best of my knowledge.

For a short time Walsingham sat silent apparently pondering over what he had heard. At last he said: "It is really much to be regretted that Windsor and Tichbourne, who seem to be honourable and estimable young men, should have associated themselves with that fellow Babington. However, it is their own doing, and they must suffer for it. We have abundant evidence of their treasonable designs. What we now want, is to procure some proof of Mary Stuart being a party to those designs, and this I fully expect to have within the next fortnight. All the conspirators are to meet at the *Blue Boar* on Friday. Babington will then probably acquaint them with Savage's proposal, of which they are for the most part ignorant and there will be rather a sharp contest, for strangely enough, these Papists are in the main wonderfully loyal to Elizabeth. What I trust to is the influence of a man named John Ballard,[1]) formerly in my pay as a spy. He was instrumental in bringing many a Papist to the gallows, but, for what reason I know not, he became a Papist himself, and made some studies — not very profound ones I should imagine — in their college at Douay. Well, as is often the case, this convert evinced extraordinary fervour, and this induced Dr. Allen to ordain him priest.

[1]) Cf. Hosack, Mary Queen of Scots and her accusers. ii, 338.

Now, so Gifford informs me, this zealous, but not very wise personage, desires to wash out with his blood the stain of having once been a persecutor. We will see that this wish is gratified. He is now going about, dressed in a military garb, under the name of Fortescue, ostensibly to get recruits for the army in the Netherlands, in realty to collect information for the exiles in Paris concerning the view taken in England of Parma's projected invasion. Naturally I was desirous to bring him and Babington together, and this has been done by means of Gifford, who is a clever fellow and most useful to me, as he is utterly unprincipled and unscrupulous. Ballard is living with Babington now, and I devoutly hope that in his foolish zeal, he will listen to Gifford's advice, and involve both the Scottish Queen and Babington with all his associates in Savage's murderous scheme."

"Then hitherto there has been nothing in the prisoner's letters by which she incriminates herself?" I asked.

"Not a single word," Walsingham replied. "There is the whole correspondence transcribed by Philipps. The dexterity that fellow displays in deciphering and imitating handwriting is really marvelous. [1]) She has heard of Parma's plan and approves of it, as a matter of course; she knows something of Babington's plot, too, and encourages him in general terms. But she is a shrewd woman, and does not make use of an expression hostile to Elizabeth nor one that could be called treasonable. The thing that astonishes me most in her is the

[1]) Ibid. ii. 381.

tenacity with which she clings to the Popish creed. Amongst the letters lying there you will find one addressed to the Archbishop of Glasgow, in Paris, wherein she makes the stipulation that, if Philip of Spain should conquer England and Scotland, her son should be instructed in the Catholic religion, 'which!' she says, 'is the thing of this world I most desire, affecting a great deal rather the salvation of his soul, than to see him monarch of all Europe.'[2]) A singular infatuation, is it not?''

''She said the same to me,'' I answered. ''She told me that it was on account of her adhesion to her religion that she was compelled to exchange the throne for a prison, and she would rather end her days in captivity than give up her faith. She stands out, besides, for the recognition of her royal rank, and the privileges attaching to it, I do not know why.''

''She is wise in doing that, for were she to renounce these rights, the very next day she would be tried for complicity in Darnley's murder, and condemned to death.''

''Do you seriously believe in her guilt? She told a different story to me.''

''To tell the truth, I do not. But it is not a question of that now. There is no chance that she would be acquitted; she would be made to appear guilty, and public opinion is against her. However, as I said, she will never be tried for that. As soon as we have got proof that she is in any way implicated in the design against Elizabeth's life, the new bill will render nugatory all her rights

[2]) Ibid. ii. 33.

as a Queen. We must wait and see what news Gifford will bring the day after to-morrow. I shall commission my emissaries to spread the report to-night of a general massacre of the Papists."

CHAPTER XXVIII.

St. Barbe speaks of the mental conflict he sustained, and how he was tormented by the demon of jealousy.

That same night, the eve of St. Peter and St. Paul, when the tremendous storm broke over London, I could not sleep. I rose, accordingly, and busied myself with the perusal of Mary Stuart's letters. Was she really the shrewd, artful woman my uncle thought her? Was not her tenacious adherence to the Catholic faith, which appeared in every letter, the offspring of her most heartfelt conviction? What truly Christian generosity, what heroic fortitude this conviction produced! The words occurred to my mind: By their fruits ye shall know them. I could not help contrasting this woman with Burghley, who abjured his beliefs, sacrificed his friends, whenever he could thereby promote his own interests. Or with my uncle, personally a man of honour, not, like Burghley, bent on enriching himself at the public expense, but yet setting aside all principles of honour and justice to gain his political ends. Finally what could be greater than the contrast she presented to our Queen, a woman of ungoverned passions, enslaved by pride and vanity!

Reflecting thus, I no longer wondered at the project of the young English nobles, the development of which my uncle and I were watching, and I actually began to hope that it might succeed. And how easily I might ensure its success? Walsingham had as good as put into my hand the

key of Mary Stuart's prison. I had only to say a word to Windsor, a man whom I could not do otherwise but esteem, and we two could convey her out of England, before my uncle and Lord Burghley had an inkling of it. There would be no difficulty in locking that old bear Paulet up in his own den. And when once the royal lady was at liberty, safe in Parma's camp, how would Elizabeth be able to withstand the onslaught of the victorious army of Flanders, which would immediately descend upon our shores? What would follow then? The forcible extirpation of the Reformed religion—to which, despite all my doubts, I still clung—a Spanish reign of terror—the Inquisition—the rekindling of the fires of Smithfield, and all the woes with the tale of which my youthful fancy was fed. Could I bear to witness all this, even with the charming Judith for my bride, boundless wealth at my disposal, one of the highest offices of State as my reward?

No: my uncle was right; England was now a Protestant country and such it must remain, unless we were to be involved in a terrible civil war, or the best blood of the land shed in quelling a widespread insurrection. The Puritans would not submit to a tenth part of the oppression which the Catholics had endured for a quarter of a century. I came to the conclusion that Mary Stuart's escape must be prevented, or still better, she must be put to death, if only proof could be found against her.

The next day but one, while I was sitting at breakfast with my uncle, a messenger brought a letter from Gifford, giving an account of all that

had passed at the meeting of the conspirators the previous evening. When my uncle heard the report of the spy, he said Windsor must have a drastic potion administered to him to keep him quiet. He would himself provide the prescription that would cure him, a warrant of arrest, duly signed and sealed, which I should carry down to Chartley with me, and put into execution as soon as Mary Stuart's answer to Babington's next letter was in our hands. The most essential part of the business was that Babington, influenced by Gifford's and Ballard's persuasions, should have the insensate folly to lay the whole plan, in which Savage's offer would be included, before the prisoner, for her sanction. That Babington and Savage understood one another was quite certain; the latter was only waiting to carry out his design until the plot was fully matured.

"The whole concern is of a graver complexion than I at first imagined," he continued. "The Papists are a stronger party than Burghley allows; and these young men display courage and determination. Notwithstanding the extreme folly of their leader, I have my misgivings as to the final issue of the plot. Were any of the measures I have taken to fail of their end, I should answer for it with my head. Elizabeth will not be trifled with. Remember, our only confederates are despicable rogues like this Gifford, the 'honest' brewer, Pooley, Philipps, Gregory and their crew, each and all of whom would not hesitate to play the traitor to me, if any one on the other side offered them a higher bribe. Let us hope our adversaries are too

honourable or too stupid to profit by their treachery. Courage, my boy, and prudence! The crisis is imminent!''

On the following morning another messenger presented himself, bearing the tidings that during the past night a prisoner had escaped from the Clink, and gone, as it appeared, up the river. In answer to my uncle's queries as to the name of the prisoner and the nature of his offence, the man replied that his name was Bellamy, a recusant from Woxindon, incarcerated on account of having harboured a Popish priest.

''Bellamy of Woxindon!'' repeated my uncle. ''Do you recollect two children, Frank, whom Topcliffe shut up in Newgate, and who were released at Windsor's and Babington's request? Was not their name Bellamy?''

I remembered the incident quite well; I remembered also, how the two children had seen their uncle in his cell in the Clink, and I told my uncle about it.

''See there,'' he rejoined, ''Windsor and Babington again! Depend upon it, this is their doing. Well, they shall hear of it some time or other. How and when was the escape discovered?'' he inquired of the messenger.

''They had just pushed off from the bank when Grey spied them,'' the man replied.

''Let Grey be taken into custody immediately, on suspicion of connivance,'' Walsingham ordered.

''How could the man possibly have seen the prisoner escape on such a night, if he had not known all about it? Most probably he lent a help-

ing hand, and then gave the alarm to save his own skin!''

No sooner had the door closed behind this messenger, than Lord Burghley was announced. My uncle hastened to meet him, as he knew that so unusual an event as a visit from the Lord Treasurer, and at so early an hour, presaged some occurrence of no slight consequence. I bowed when he entered, and was about to withdraw, but Burghley who was in a state of extraordinary perturbation, begged me to remain. When he had recovered himself sufficiently to communicate his tidings, he told us what I had already guessed, that his daughter had become a Papist; furthermore that she had absconded from Court in the company of one of the Queen's pages, a lad named Bellamy, who for his insolence to the Queen deserved to be sent to the gallows.

''What!'' I exclaimed, ''can that be possible? Bellamy is not more than ten or twelve years old. How can Miss Judith have eloped with him?''

''There is no question of an elopement, my daughter doesn't want to be married. She has very different ideas in her head. She says she is going to enter a convent abroad to do penance and pray for my conversion. There is the dutiful epistle I received from her.'' So saying, the irate father drew a crumpled letter from his pocket and flung it on the table.

''Whatever am I to do now?'' he added.

''Get possession of your daughter again by all means,'' my uncle answered. ''Everything can

be managed then. When she is once under the gentle rule of a good husband, we shall hear no more of these girlish fancies."

"You are quite right, and one object I had in coming here was to urge the bridegroom you proposed for her, to aid me in my search. The marriage shall be concluded as soon as we get her back. What is to be done first?"

Walsingham replied that messengers on horseback should be despatched to all the nearest ports, with a description of the fugitives, and the offer of a reward of £10 to anyone who should detain them. When he heard that three days and three nights had already elapsed since their flight, he looked grave.

"They were not missed until the Court had removed to Windsor, and the news reached me at the same time as this letter," the Lord Treasurer explained.

"The flight apparently was not planned long beforehand," continued Walsingham, or I should be inclined to connect it with another event, that took place only last night, of which I have just heard, the escape of a prisoner named Bellamy, the brother or uncle of that page, from the Clink. Yet when I come to think of it, it may be so. They may have made their way from Richmond to Woxindon, and waited there or elsewhere, until the prisoner could effect his escape, according to a preconcerted plan, and they all could cross the seas together. The boat in which the captive was rescued is said to have gone up the river, but that may only have been a feint. The probability is

that they are all now in hiding somewhere in London or Woxindon, intending to cross the channel to-night, or at any rate before many days have passed. Thus we may hope to be in time to stop them, as no vessel will leave the mouth of the Thames before ebbtide. I will have several houses I know of, strictly watched, and at Woxindon a domiciliary search must be made."

"That search shall be thorough, if aught that I can do will make it so," Burghley said, as he rose to depart. "Will you accompany me, St. Barbe?"

I assented willingly, and hastened to give the necessary directions to the secretaries, and enjoin on them despatch in transcribing the letters, which were duly signed and sealed by the Lord Treasurer. A little later I found myself riding by his side in the direction of Harrow, followed by a troop of men-at-arms.

The rain which had been falling all night, had not yet ceased, and the roads were in a terrible state. This did not tend to raise my spirits or those of my companion. We were wet through and covered with mud when we reached Harrow, and stopped before the house of Sir Richard Page, the mayor. That corpulent personage was filled with consternation at seeing the Lord Treasurer in person at his door; when he heard what brought him thither, he poured out a flood of denunciations against his Popish relatives. He himself would conduct the search, he said, as he was acquainted with every corner of the manor house, and the whole village should turn out, to form a cordon round it.

As soon as this was done, we proceeded to the house, Burghley, Page and myself, with a chosen band of pursuivants, and demanded admittance. The few old servants whom we found there were interrogated first. Not until the Lord Treasurer threatened them with the rack, would they admit that, while the storm was at its height, Master Frith, who had been for a time at Court, returned home, accompanied by a young lady. They had left the next day, whither they went, they did not know. On being asked who had gone with them, the servants parried the question. At length one of the maids, who was trembling with fright, said a young gentleman had come from London and fetched them away. This she said with the evident intention of exonerating her employers.

I inquired whether it was Mr. Babington? "No," the girl replied, "not the gentleman who married Miss Anne, but another, who had often come with him; rather a short gentleman, with a high colour and brown hair."

"That must be Windsor!" I exclaimed.

"Perhaps that was his name; and I heard he was to marry the young lady," the serving-woman added.

I opened my eyes very wide on hearing this. Burghley simply remarked he had suspected something of the kind, religion could not be the only motive; where young girls were concerned, there was sure to be some love affair in the background. He asked me who this Windsor was?

I replied that he was Lord Windsor's brother, an inveterate Papist, but it was hardly possible

that he could be intimately acquainted with Miss Judith.

"Quite possible," the young lady's father rejoined. "I should not be surprised if it was he who gave her that accursed book of Campion's, and corresponded with her about it. These amours often spring up in this way; you know, St. Barbe, you yourself began with something very like it!"

The arrow hit its mark; the fire of jealousy, which such a slight matter kindles, began to consume my heart.

The domiciliary visit was not productive of great results. A handkerchief marked with the initials *J. C.* testified to Miss Cecil's having been there. The only members of the family who were at home were the old granddame, very infirm and feeble, one of her granddaughters and one of her sons, a goodnatured fellow, but partly imbecile. The old lady did not attempt to deny of having given shelter to a stranger during the recent heavy storm; but that, she said, could be no crime. The visitor had departed on the morrow, she was not aware of her destination.

On the mayor inquiring as to the whereabouts of her son Remy and her other two grandchildren, she replied with perfect composure, that their absence either was or was not connected with an event concerning which the authorities had a right to make investigation. In the latter case, their absence from home and the place they were in concerned no one: in the former, no law could compel a mother to give evidence against her own child.

Burghley bit his lips with rage, but the old lady was not to be intimidated. From the imbecile son, whom they called Barty, and from the granddaughter nothing could be extorted; the young lady complained of severe headache, and indeed she looked unwell, though I fancy her chief malady was self-will. Thus the examination of the inhabitants of the house ended without information of any moment having been elicited. The search, in which the outhouses and a ruined castle in the immediate vicinity were included, was equally fruitless. A hiding place, provisioned for case of need, was discovered, but there was no one in it. So we had to ride back through the rain and mud to London, without having attained our object. The long ride and the annoyance upset the Lord Treasurer so much, that it brought on a violent attack of gout, which confined him to his room for several weeks.

We found no tidings awaiting us from Gravesend or any other of the ports. Walsingham told me, as the result of his inquiries, that neither Babington nor Tichbourne had left town, but nothing could be heard of Windsor. This confirmed my suspicions; they were strengthened still more by a letter that my uncle showed me the next morning. It had been taken from a skipper's boy, who had orders to deliver it into Tichbourne's hands. It was addressed to Tichbourne, and ran as follows:

To my faithful and dearly beloved, greeting and brotherly love! These lines, written in haste from the Thames, are to convey to you the joyful tidings that I have placed my sweetheart in safety on board the vessel in question, for which thanks

be to God. Give the worthy B. B. a gratuity, he has well earned it in truth! He will put me ashore on the Essex coast, whence I shall take horse to Chartley by way of Bedford, as I shall be safer there than in London. Salute Babington and the others from me. Now that I am assured as to the safety of my affianced bride, I shall have a better heart for the carrying out of our scheme. W.

All doubt was now removed. Miss Cecil Windsor's affianced bride! I was consumed with rage, and a missive from the mayor of Gravesend poured oil on the flames. It was to certify that the messenger who carried the despatch, having been accidentally detained *en route*, did not arrive until an hour after some of the vessels had weighed anchor; amongst these was the *Jeanette*, bound for Dunkirk, which he thought suspicious, and in pursuit of which a man-of-war had been sent. The other craft had been boarded, but no discovery made.

I ground my teeth in impotent anger, and wanted my uncle to arrest Windsor forthwith. But he shook his head, and bade me have patience, for to put him in prison would be to defeat all our plans for the peace of the country; besides he was guilty of nothing for which he could be brought to the gallows. "Let us have patience awhile," he concluded "he shall be reckoned with for everything sooner or later. This very day you shall start on your way to Chartley, with a warrant against him and his accomplices in your pocket. But it must not be put into execution, until Mary Stuart has answered Babington's letter, and made herself accessory to his crime."

CHAPTER XXIX.

St. Barbe relates how Mary Stuart's letter to Babington was opened and deciphered.

Nothing seemed changed on my return to Chartley; Sir Amias was as surly as ever, his prisoner as gentle and dignified in her manner towards me as heretofore. I thought her however rather more cheerful and animated; doubtless the hope of a speedy release, which her friends held out to her, gave her fresh life and spirit. I was so angry with Windsor, so embittered against all Papists, that I regarded her as a crafty hypocrite, and made my visits to her as short as possible.

The day following my arrival I met Windsor in the inn. I was astonished at the frank cordiality of his greeting, which, for all the constraint I put upon myself, I could not return civilly. I feigned not to see his outstretched hand, and declined his invitation to drink a tankard of ale with him. He asked in some surprise, if he had unwillingly offended me? I answered, "Mr. Windsor, you appear to think all is fair in love as in war. But we have not got to the end of the day yet."

"I do not understand you," he replied. "It is true that I am engaged to a young lady"—

"Whom you have conveyed to a safe hiding-place!" I broke in. "You can hardly expect me to wish you joy, and drink a bumper to the success of your courtship."

He changed colour, and said nothing; I turned my back on him and walked away. He hurried

after me, and laying his hand on my arm, began something about a misunderstanding, but I threw off his hand, saying: "Keep your distance, sir! No Popish sneak shall treat me as a friend!"

"A sneak!" he exclaimed, flushing crimson, and laying his hands on the hilt of his rapier. "Remember I have as good blood in my veins as you have, and my religion gives you no right to insult me, seeing I have always professed it openly."

"I do not call you a sneak on account of your religion," I replied, "but because with your Jesuitical wiles you have perverted the young lady from her belief, and under cover of concern for her soul wormed a way into her affections. Out upon you for a hypocrite and sanctimonious dissembler! You shall answer for it one day!"

Restraining his anger, he said: "Mr. St. Barbe, you are under a strange misapprehension, and do me grievous wrong. But you are too much excited now to listen to reason. Let me assure you of one thing: I never had the slightest idea that you paid your addresses to my affianced bride, or that you were ever acquainted with her. I assure you on my word of honour."—

This was a little too much. Every lady at Court knew that I aspired to Miss Cecil's hand. We were as good as engaged, for both the Queen and her father were known to favour my suit. And this man had the effrontery to tell me he knew nothing of it! I turned on my heel and left him there, in the midst of his protestations. The next day I got a note from him: it was sent back unopened; nor when we met by chance would I return his salutation.

About a week passed without anything noteworthy occurring. I heard of Windsor's goings on from the waiter at the *Mayflower*. He went out a great deal to Babington's place at Dethick, and the principal towns in the neighbourhood; from all I heard, I gathered that the conspirators thought the time for action was come, and were collecting their forces to strike. I thought it advisable to take some precautions against the meditated blow. Without attracting attention, the garrison in the Castle was strengthened, and a body of men-at-arms were ordered to take up their quarters in the neighbouring town of Burton. The watch at the city gate had directions to keep a sharp look out, and should they at any time see the flag hoisted on the tower of Chartley, they were to hasten to the assistance of the garrison. Thus all was prepared on both sides, when one evening the fat brewer sent me word that Babington's epistle had been delivered to the royal prisoner and she had let him know through her secretary that he should have an answer in three day's time.

On the day when this letter from the Queen was expected, I betook myself, as agreed, to the *Green Dragon* in Burton, where I found Philipps and Gregory, whom my uncle had sent down from London. As soon as it arrived, they were to open and decipher this letter, which, as Walsingham said, would reveal to us Mary Stuart's inmost heart. [1])

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[1]) Hosack ii., p. 357. "We attend her very heart at the next." Philipps to Walsingham. Record office 14th July.

It was with keen anticipation that we waited until the brewer should return, bringing with him the document upon which so much depended. Philipps and Gregory sat at a table on which pens and paper, small sharp knives and other implements lay ready, for removing the seal and copying the contents of the letter. The two rogues were playing a game of cards to while away the time, while I paced impatiently up and down the room. Gifford was waiting below, prepared to carry the epistle to London the same night, after it had been re-sealed with all the skill for which Gregory was noted. It makes me sick now to think of those fellows. Gifford soon received the reward of his iniquity. Before twelve months had passed, he was thrown into prison in Paris for some criminal action, and there ended his days after the manner of the unhappy Judas.

At last the heavy dray rolled into the yard, and we heard the empty casks taken out. I began to think that no letter was forthcoming, for more than an hour elapsed before the heavy tread of the obese brewer was heard ascending the stairs. He entered, and sinking into the nearest seat, began to wipe the prespiration from his brow, remarking that it was really too much for him to mount so high. If Jacob's ladder, reaching to Heaven, about which his favourite preacher had recently discoursed with such unction, were half as steep as that staircase, he must decline the ascent altogether.

"It is not very likely that you will require a ladder, when you go to your own place," I inter-

posed impatiently. "We want the letter, not to hear about your preachers."

"I pray you have a little patience sir," he rejoined. "Do not be hard on a good christian, who has given up this world and the next in the service of Her Majesty and the pure Gospel."

"At any rate," I replied, "you make a good thing of it as far as money goes. Give us the letter and leave us alone."

He went on grumbling about the evil times, and how much it took to pay the hungry preachers with their wives and families; meanwhile he slowly unbuttoned his doublet, and drew forth a thick packet of letters, tied up in parchment. As soon as he had carefully counted and pocketed the price of his treachery, he left the apartment.

Quickly and deftly Gregory loosened the silken string, leaving the seal intact, and I was able to read the superscription of the various missives. They were addressed to the French ambassador, and to different prelates, princes, personages of note both in France and Scotland. But with these I was not concerned, the one of interest and importance was the last, addressed "To our trusty and well-beloved Anthony Babington, Esquire. Lord of Dethick etc." I looked closely at the seal. It bore the impress of the Queen's ring; a square shield, quartered with the Scotch lion, the English leopards, the Irish harp and the French lilies. On each side of the shield were the letters M. R. (Maria Regina.) I handed the letters to Gregory, and watched him first touch the seal with a little oil, then cover it with a soft substance, which speedily

hardened. "I do that for fear lest the sealing wax should break, or give way. In that case I could seal it afresh with this mould, and get as good an impression as the original one," he explained. His next act was to pass a thin, sharp-edged blade betwixt the seal and the paper, detaching the former with such consumate adroitness that no mark remained either on seal or paper. "So far, so good," he said. "Now I must beg that in reading and copying the letter, great care be taken not to hurt the seal. Then with a little hot wax we can easily re-seal it, so that the sharpest eye will be unable to detect any trace of its having been tampered with."

The letter was a long one, the contents showing that the whole scheme had been expounded to her. It was in French, for Mary Stuart preferred that language to English, and was written by one of her secretaries in cipher. Philipps had deciphered so many of her letters that he was able to read it as fast as I could write from his dictation.

The letter [1]) — as far as I can recall its contents at this distance of time — began with an eulogium of the zeal Babington displayed for the cause of religion in general, and of the captive Queen in particular. The number and weight of the Catholic party was daily dwindling, and unless measures were soon taken by the Catholic potentates, it would be too late to prevent the extinction of the faith in England. The interests of religion were the determining motive that induced her to sanction the scheme; she was content to waive her own rights,

[1]) For the Queen of Scot's letter vide Hosack, ii, p. 359.

except in so far as they were bound up in those interests. She impressed upon her friends the importance of attempting nothing rashly, without due deliberation and careful arrangement. It was necessary to ascertain what forces on foot as well as on horse could be raised, and who were to be the captains appointed for them in every shire; which towns, ports and havens could be depended upon to grant succour to auxiliaries from the Low Countries, Spain and France; what place might be thought fittest of landing the troops; what monies, armour, ammunition and provisions were at their disposal; by what means did the six gentlemen intend to proceed in the work of liberation. All this must be well considered; she advised them to consult Mendoza, the Spanish ambassador in France, in whom she had the greatest confidence. Not until they had the certain promise of adequate succour from abroad, would she give her consent to the enterprise, otherwise the result would be as disastrous as that of the recent rising in the North. Another thing to be thought of was that she should be provided with a sufficiently strong escort, or conveyed to some fortress where she would be in safety, for were the Queen to get her again into her power, she would thrust her into a dungeon whence there would be no chance of escape, if she did not dispose of her in a yet more summary manner. And far more than her own evil fate, would she deplore, in case of failure, the misfortunes that would befall her faithful adherents.

She then proceeded to name several Catholic noblemen, who might be enlisted in the project;

adding a warning against traitors, who might even be found under the disguise of Catholic priests. Finally she said that in all probability at the end of the summer she would be removed to Dudley Castle; they might find out when that would be, and arrange for her to make her escape then. Or if she remained at Chartley, one of three plans might be pursued. 1) If she were allowed to ride out on the lonely moor between Chartley and Stafford, a body of some 50 or 60 horsemen could carry her off, as her guard seldom exceeded 20 men-at-arms. 2) It would be possible to set fire to the granary near the castle in the middle of the night, and in the confusion that ensued, it would not be difficult for the conspirators to penetrate into the castle and carry her out. 3) It might be so contrived, that one of the wagons which bring provisions to the castle in the early morning, should be overturned in passing through the gateway, so that the gates could not be closed, when a troop lying in ambush close by might enter and make themselves masters of the castle.

Promising to reward Babington's loyal devotion to the best of her ability, and commending him and his comrades to the protection of Almighty God, the captive Queen ended and signed this lengthy epistle, *Maria R.*

Such, then, was the purport of the letter. My feelings as I transcribed it may be imagined. It was a political intrigue on a large scale, every detail of which had been carefully considered, for a rising of the Catholic party in England, Scotland and Ireland, simultaneously with the landing of

Spanish or French forces on our shores. In concert, and only in concert with this, was the project of her release from captivity to be entertained.

It is true, that she had, as Walsingham anticipated, laid open "her very heart". But nowhere was there a syllable that suggested the existence of any design on Elizabeth's life; nowhere a hint, which betrayed any suspicion of Savage's proposal. On the contrary, the only mention that was made of her Majesty, clearly showed that the possibility of such a design had not entered into her calculations.

Once more I carefully collated my copy with the original, making Philipps decipher it word by by word, in case a line, an expression might have been passed over. But no; it was impossible to detect the slightest omission.

I was at a loss now how to act, since the letter afforded no ground for proceedings against Mary Stuart. It showed that she participated in a conspiracy to dethrone Elizabeth, but not to take her life. Should I arrest Windsor, as I was commissioned to do, if the contents of the letter were what my uncle expected, or would he make another attempt to cause her to incriminate herself? As the result of my reflections, I determined to despatch Philipps and his comrades to London that same night, with the whole batch of letters, and one from me begging for further instructions without delay. This announcement was anything but welcome to the two men. Philipps coughed significantly, and said: "Excuse me, sir, but it appears you have not found in this letter all you wished to find.

Well, when anything is written in cipher like that, it is nothing wonderful, if, on closer examination, one remarks one or two words which one might have overlooked just at first." He emphazised his words with a sly wink.

"But we went through it line by line," I answered; for I thought he could hardly have the audacity to propose to make interpolations.

"So we did," he rejoined with a disagreeable smile. "But sharp eyes—eyes sharpened with a purpose—can read between the lines, you have only got to tell me what you would like—"

"You rascal," I exclaimed, "how can you venture to propose such a thing to me? Walsingham shall hear of that!"

"Tell him, and welcome," was the insolent answer. "One would have thought you had known enough of the secrets of statecraft, and learnt enough in your uncle's school, not to make an outcry about a simple little artifice. For what do you suppose the prudent Secretary of State keeps us in his pay, if not to make use of us?"

"As spies, not as forgers," I replied. "At any rate you shall not falsify this letter, on which the life of a Queen depends, if I can prevent it. I am heartily glad that I have a correct copy, and thus possess the means of detecting alterations and exposing falsifications. Mark that, Mr. Philipps; and now give orders for your horses; for in an hours' time you must be in the saddle. Gifford shall follow in the morning."

I leave it to my friend Windsor to relate what occurred in the course of the next few days, before the return of my messengers from London.

CHAPTER XXX.

I ride to London on an errand of life and death, and meet with an almost incredible adventure on the Thames.

No sooner had my betrothed with her little brother, their uncle, who had just escaped from prison, and Miss Cecil, been taken on board the *Jeanette*, than she weighed anchor, and put out to sea. Meanwhile our boatman rowed us across to the opposite side of the river, where we landed. It was with considerable difficulty that we got out of the hands of the coastguards, who, on the lookout for seminary priests and Jesuits, made sure that they had a prize in us. At length we succeeded in convincing them with the aid of a *douceur*, that we were not the persons they wanted, and we were allowed to go. Uncle Remy directed his course over Barking to Woxindon; I proceeded through Bedford and Leicester to Burton, which I reached without any mishap. The morning after my arrival, I had rather a stormy encounter with St. Barbe, as he has already stated. I was astonished to hear him accuse me of having seduced the affections of his lady-love, and at first thought he meant my Mary; afterwards I concluded that he referred to Miss Cecil, to whom I was not aware that he was engaged. I wrote a note to explain the misunderstanding, but he returned the billet unopened, and there the matter rested.

Nothing occurred for some time to break the monotony of the weeks that followed. To me

they seemed to pass slowly, for I was daily expecting to hear that the preliminary arrangements for our enterprise were completed. I, on my part, was ready, the forester's cottage having been prepared to serve as a hiding place for the Queen of Scots in case of need. The end of July had come; hot, sultry weather had succeeded the long period of rain, and the peasants were busied with gathering in the crops. The sun on the open moorland was scorching, so that I was fain to betake myself to a shady nook that I had discovered, beside a stream which meandering through the wood flowed into the neighbouring river Trent.

Now it happened one day when I was angling for trout in this staid stream, I was fortunate enough to be the means of doing St. Barbe a good service. Whilst bathing in the Trent hard by, he got out of his depth, and was in sore peril of his life. Attracted to the spot by his cries, I arrived just in time to rescue him from drowning, at no slight risk to myself, and convey him to my rooms at the *Mayflower*. Thus we were brought together again, and an opportunity was afforded me of clearing up the misapprehension between us. Nevertheless, he did not appear at his ease with me, and in spite of his gratitude for the service I had rendered him, there was still some coolness in his manner towards me.

Three days subsequent to this adventure, when St. Barbe was quite recovered from the shock he had received, he came to my room at the inn towards evening, and sat talking with me over a

tankard of ale. He seemed very restless, and every time a horse's hoofs were heard on the road, he sprang up and went to the window. His conversation all the while consisted of an eulogium of his uncle Walsingham's astuteness, and the clever manner in which he had discovered and exposed various political plots. I began to suspect that his intention in dwelling on this subject was to give me a friendly hint, when our talk was broken short by the arrival of a horseman, dusty and travel-stained, who pulled up at the inn-door, and asked if St. Barbe were there. My companion instantly rose, and pale with excitement, rushed down stairs. He exchanged a few words with the rider, who then handed him a letter, which he drew from his breast-pocket. Hurriedly breaking the seal, St. Barbe ran his eye over the contents. They cannot have been lengthy, for almost immediately he folded the epistle again, and thrust it into his pocket. In doing so, he glanced up at the window where I was standing. That one glance told me as plainly as words could have done, that our conspiracy was discovered.

The messenger received orders to go on to the castle, and a few moments later St. Barbe re-entered my room, closing the door behind him carefully. I thought he had come to arrest me, and instinctively reached out my hand for my rapier, which hung on the wall, for I was resolved to sell my life dearly.

"Let the sword alone, Windsor," he said gravely. "You cannot think I should be so basely ungrateful, as to send the man who saved my life to the gallows. Besides, I should be all the more

reluctant to do so, because I feel certain that you would never agree to any dishonourable design, whatever your confederates might propose. Yes, you have guessed right, Walsingham has long been cognizant of this conspiracy; he has intercepted the Scottish Queen's last letter, and now gives me orders to arrest you quietly, and send you to London, as soon as your fellow conspirators are in his hands. Take care, therefore, to be well out of the way, when the soldiers surround the *Mayflower* to-night. If you ride hard and take the road through Loughborough and Spalding, you might reach the Wash to-morrow, and get out of the country before I can overtake you. If you want money, I will gladly lend you the amount you require."

Deeply touched by his kindness, I thanked him with all my heart. I had money, but I owed my life to him.

"Now we are quits," he said, shaking my hand. "Farewell, we are not likely to see one another again on earth." Thereupon he left the room quickly, and disappeared in the direction of the castle.

It was some moments before I could collect my thoughts sufficiently to decide upon the course of action. In such cases my habit is to say a decade of the rosary, and I did so then. I had not got far before I saw my way clearly. Walsingham had not had my comrades arrested yet, because he wished to take them all at once, and that before two days are over, otherwise he would have had me sent to London in custody at once. There was still a

possibility that I could warn them in time; consequently it was not to the Wash, but to London, that I must ride as fast as my horse could carry me.

A few things were quickly put together, and leaving on my table a sum sufficient to pay my host, I slipped down to the stables, saddled my mare, and led her out by a back way through the lanes into the country. There I mounted, and walked for a short distance at a foot's pace. Not a soul met me. On reaching the nearest wood, I turned and looked once more at Chartley, and thought with a sigh of the unhappy prisoner within the castle walls. Then I put spurs to my horse, and rode forward on my errand of life and death.

At nightfall the next day I reached London, and entered the city by the Highgate, through which a drove of bullocks were passing. Perhaps the guard took me for one of the cattle dealers, for I was covered with sweat and dust, and bestrode a nag that no gentleman would care to own. It was the only substitute I could obtain when my beautiful mare broke down, halfway between Stratford and Enfield. Wending my way through a labyrinth of alleys and ill-lighted streets, I reached Fleet street and the Strand. Our house by the *Anchor Inn* looked deserted; passing it by I proceeded to Babington's residence at Temple Bar. The servant who appeared at my call informed me that his master and the other gentlemen were gone by Pooley's invitation to an entertainment, he thought, at the *Paris Garden*. I asked if anything special had occurred? Yes, the man replied;

Captain Fortescue, the officer who was staying with Mr. Babington, was arrested the day before yesterday. His master had been a good deal alarmed by this at first; but all was quiet again now.

I felt not a moment was to be lost. Fortescue, or rather Father John Ballard, in prison, and all our confederates invited by Pooley to a banquet, manifestly with the intention of arresting them one and all! But I could not make my appearance at the *Paris Garden* as I then was, without arousing suspicion; I therefore stopped at an inn near the Temple, put up my horse, and got myself into somewhat better trim. Taking a slip of paper, I wrote on it the words: *Fly, fly immediately; W. knows all; the last letter from Ch. is in his possession. You are surrounded by his emissaries; fly for your life.* No signature was needed, as Babington knew my handwriting. With this billet in my pocket I left the inn, after ordering supper to be ready on my return, and hastened in the direction of the river.

My way led past our house. I got over the hedge into the garden, and finding the back door ajar, I entered, shouting the names of Barbara and Tichbourne. At first there was no answer; then a door upstairs was heard to open, and a voice called out, in harsh and grating tones: "Come up, sir; Mr. Tichbourne will be back directly."

The voice was a peculiar one, and I instantly recognized it as Topcliffe's. Quick as thought I sped through the door and down to the river. Our boat lay as usual, moored at the foot of the steps; I sprang into it and pushed off from the bank.

Before I got far, I fancied myself pursued; but I pushed my little craft between some others of a larger size, and, favoured by the darkness, reached the southwest side in safety.

The *Paris Garden* was a blaze of light; the sound of musical instruments rang through the still night air. To elude observation, I avoided the principal entrance, and made my way in through a side gate. The curtains of the largest tent being drawn up to admit the cool air, I obtained a view of the interior, which was profusely decorated. There the gilded youth of London were disporting themselves, tricked out in gay habiliments of the latest French fashion. They stood and sat in groups at the tables, taking refreshments, playing cards, or chattering merrily as they watched the dancers, moving in stately measure to the sound of clarinet and fiddle. The festive scene, the rich dresses, the sparkling jewels and nodding plumes, the songs and laughter, were little in harmony with the care and anxiety that filled my heart. I surveyed the guests for some time in vain; at length at a distant table, laid apparently for a party of about twelve, I descried Babington, easily recognizable by his cloak of light blue velvet, trimmed with gold. Next to him sat a broad shouldered man, unknown to me; on the opposite side of the table I saw Salisbury and some other acquaintances, not members of our association; Pooley himself was seated at the other end. Several places were empty, as if the full number of guests had not yet arrived.

While I was considering how I could possibly

convey my warning to my friends without delivering myself into the enemies' hands, I saw my good Tichbourne approaching the tent. I sprang forward, plucked him by the sleeve, and drew him into the shade of a tree.

"You here, Windsor!" he exclaimed in astonishment, "I thought you were at Chartley!"

"There is no time for talking," I answered, under my breath. "We must all fly forthwith, without an instant's delay. Ask no questions, only tell me how I can warn Babington and the others in there, who do not suspect they are being caught in a snare. And do not you go home; Topcliffe is waiting for you there!"

"Is it so?" he calmly replied. "I have thought for the last half hour I was being followed. I only wonder that those two fellows there have not already apprehended me."

"Their intention is to take us all prisoners at this banquet, to which that arch-traitor Pooley invited you. How are the others to be told? I have a billet here for Babington, but I fear it will be of no use. It is impossible for him to read it, and warn the others, without the pursuivants observing it, and cutting off their retreat. I have got our boat here close by; if we could but reach that, we might ply our oars to some purpose!"

"We must make the attempt," Tichbourne answered. "Give me the note, and do you take the boat to the landing-place just below. If I fail, at least you may be able to save yourself."

I wanted him to take the part he had assigned to me; but he said, and justly, that as he was

watched, it would be useless for him to try and take the boat to the place agreed upon. So we shook hands and parted; I contrived to get out of the garden unnoticed, and waited with the boat close to the landing place.

Half-an-hour passed in feverish apprehension. Suddenly the music ceased and a confused shout arose, in which I fancied I could distinguish the cry, "Traitors! Stop the traitors!" My warning came too late, I said to myself. Yet I waited awhile, in the hope that perhaps one of my friends might escape, and make for the riverside. And so it was; rapid footsteps were heard approaching; a man ran up, with another close at his heels. In an instant I had the boat's nose at the steps: Tichbourne leaped into it; his pursuer, a sheriff's officer, laid hold of the boat, shouting: "In the Queen's name! surrender!" I thrust him back violently with one of the oars, he stumbled and fell into the water.

"Where are the others?" I asked Tichbourne.

"They have all gone off in one direction or another, where they thought they could find safety," he replied. Then, while with rapid strokes we pulled out into the middle of the river, he told me in a few abrupt sentences, how Babington, when he read the note, made a sign to Salisbury, and, leaving his hat and cloak behind, passed out quickly through the nearest opening in the tent. Pooley, evidently expecting them to return, made no movement until he (Tichbourne) and Barnewell attempted, under some pretext, to quit the table. He then barred their way and gave his attendants

the signal to arrest all the company. Tichbourne knocked Pooley down and with Donne and Travers made his escape, before the officers laid hands on him.

For a moment we rested on our oars, to discover whether we were pursued. There was no doubt of this; we heard shouting on either bank, and by the flickering light of the torches saw boats pulling off in pursuit. Away we rowed down the stream, in the hope that by getting among the ships lying at anchor below the bridge, we might evade our pursuers. But swiftly as our boat flew, they gained rapidly upon us, and the cry: "Stop the traitors!" sounded nearer and nearer every moment. We soon saw our case was desperate. Tichbourne drew in his oars.

"We have no more chance," he said. "May God have mercy on our souls!"

"One chance remains," I replied"throw off your cloak, friend; we will swim for our lives."

"That may do for you; for me it would be certain death. Give my love to my young wife, my poor Alice; I would fain have spared her this sorrow. Save yourself and pray for me, only be quick."

I lingered a moment, urging my companion to jump into the river and cling to an oar to keep himself afloat; he refused, so, as our pursuers were almost alongside, I let myself over the side into the water.

Fortunately for me, the officers did not see me, owing to the darkness, although when they boarded our skiff, I was not a boat's length off. Finding

only one where they had seen two men, they began to search for me, igniting their torches for this purpose. Carried down by the force of the current, I struck out vigorously to the left, and thus succeeded in passing under a different arch of the bridge to my pursuers, whose torches cast a lurid glare on each side of the boat. "There he goes," I heard one exclaim; and a long pole struck the water within a few feet of me.

"No, it is only a log of wood," another said.

"Look out for the pier ahead!" cried a third.

Providentially for me, their attention was diverted to the management of their boat. But another peril now presented itself. The tide was ebbing fast, and the rush of the water through the arches of the bridge caused a dangerous eddy below the piers. Into this I was drawn, and carried under, no less than three times, my shoulder being also struck violently against the stonework of the bridge. To get free cost me a hard struggle, and when I regained the surface, and struck out into smoother water, it was only to encounter fresh dangers. Exactly in front of me was the barge of the river-guard, lighted up with cauldrons of burning pitch. I was perceived, so there was nothing to be done but to dive beneath the vessel. I drew a deep breath, invoked the aid of the Blessed Virgin and plunged downwards: when I rose to the surface, the barge was a considerable distance behind, and the boat of my pursuers a good way off. My strength was however exhausted, I could only drift with the stream and in my helplessness was almost tempted to give myself up to the officers. But the

hangman and the gallows rose up before me, and I resolved to make one more effort to save myself.

I was in the neighbourhood of St. Catharine's wharf, and it occurred to me that I might reach Bill Bell's house. Summoning all my powers, I managed with great difficulty, to swim across the Thames. Despair gave me strength, and guided by the light in the attic where the sick girl lay, I reached the old tenement, and clung to the wooden posts on which it was raised. But even then I was in an evil plight. To call for help would have brought the watchmen to the spot and led to my capture; the only alternative was to hold on, no easy matter in my exhausted condition, until such time as I could attract the notice of the inhabitants of the house. Presently my situation became intolerable; the time as it crept by, appeared to me an eternity; my senses began to fail, my head swam; the rushing of the water deafened and bewildered me. In fact, when the bell of St. Paul's tolled midnight, I felt that before another hour had passed, I should have to appear before the judgment-seat of God. Suddenly, however, the strange singing in my ears changed into the regular splash of oars; a strong hand laid hold of me, and a lantern flashed full into my face.

"Mr. Windsor! For God's sake, can it be you?" a voice exclaimed, and two sturdy arms lifted me into the boat. Who spoke to me, and what I answered, I knew not until afterwards, for I immediately lost consciousness. When I came to myself, I was lying in a dark, narrow, chamber, of which I could touch the walls on each side. My first thought was that it was a prison cell.

CHAPTER XXXI.

St. Barbe tells how he gave his uncle reason to be displeased with him.

When I called out the guard of Chartley Castle at midnight, and went through the farce of surrounding the *Mayflower*, and demanding admission in the Queen's name in order to arrest Mr. Edward Windsor on a charge of high treason, the individual in question had, naturally, long since made good his escape. I feigned astonishment, and announced my intention of sending horsemen in pursuit of him at daybreak. They were to go to the Wash, but a countryman told us that he had seen the doctor riding in an opposite direction, southwards on the road to London. The thought struck me at once: the foolish fellow, instead of providing for his own safety, has made an effort to save his confederates! This must not be permitted, for I considered it probable that one of them, Savage, at any rate, would attempt something desperate against the Queen, so as not to sacrifice his life to no purpose. So I took horse immediately, that I might acquaint my uncle as speedily as possible with what had occurred, although I had no doubt that in the meantime Babington and his associates would have been apprehended.

All the next night I was in the saddle, the night which witnessed Windsor's adventurous flight on the Thames. Towards mid-day I reached London, half dead with fatigue and smothered with dust. Without waiting to change my clothes or take any

refreshment, I hastened to my uncle. His reception of me was by no means encouraging. "So you have escorted Windsor hither yourself," he said. "It would have been better to have remained where you were, and awaited further directions, because we shall have to make a domiciliary visit to Chartley one of these days, before that Stuart woman hears of the failure of the plot."

"You are mistaken, uncle," I replied with some embarrassment, "I have not brought Windsor. He slipped through my fingers, and I am told he took the road to London."

Walsingham changed colour, and looked at me as I had never seen him look before. For several minutes he did not utter a word; at last, with forced composure he said: "How so, Windsor slipped through your fingers! We had better not ask how that happened, or I might have to acknowledge your inefficiency to Burghley and the Queen, not to mention worse consequences. Now I understand how it was that Babington and nearly all his fellow-conspirators escaped arrest yesterday evening. One of my agents told me Windsor came to the *Paris Garden* and warned his friends, but I swore at him for a fool. He was right, after all! And for this we have to thank your extraordinary sagacity!"

"I will tell you the truth, uncle," I answered. "Windsor had saved my life two or three days before, at the risk of his own, and so I—"

Walsingham silenced me with a gesture. "I want to hear nothing more," he said. "You have let Windsor escape; if that were all, I should not

take it to heart. But now Babington and almost all the others have got away! I do not know how to tell the Queen of the conspiracy, on which as you know, depended the success of a political intrigue of great importance. If I cannot succeed in capturing the ring-leaders, at least, it will be my ruin with the Queen. Her thirst for vengeance is unquenchable. In that respect she is a true daughter of Henry VIII. Besides, I have drawn considerably upon my own private means to bring this scheme to the hoped for issue. It cuts me to the heart that you, of all people, should be the one who is mainly, if not entirely, to blame for its miscarriage. But that is always the result, if one allows one's feelings to get the better of one's judgment."

He dismissed me very coldly. I went to Pooley, and from him I heard the following details. As soon as the Queen's letter was in Walsingham's hands, he gave Topcliffe instructions to keep a constant watch on the conspirators, but not to apprehend either of them, lest this should alarm the others. The arrest of Captain Fortescue, or rather the priest John Ballard, was through a mistake on the part of the sheriff's officer. Babington had, in consequence of it, gone to Walsingham, ostensibly to discover whether the arrest had any connection with the conspiracy, or whether it was because Fortescue's real calling had been found out. He hoped in reality, by this bold step to dissipate any suspicion Walsingham might entertain towards him, as he imagined he had done on a former occasion. But the astute Secretary of State

again deluded the young man entirely, so that he was completely unconscious of the snare that was closing him in its toils. He and his confederates accepted in all good faith Pooley's invitation to a banquet to be held in the *Paris Garden*. Guards were posted at the entrances, and on the arrival of the last of the guests, Tichbourne, Pooley was about to give the concerted signal for their arrest to his satellites, when Babington rose and hastily went out. As he left behind him his sword and cloak, Pooley imagined he was gone to order some particularly choice wine; but finding he did not return, he went after him. Just at that moment Tichbourne made a sign to his associates; the guard attempted to seize him, but he gave them the slip, and got off, as did all the others except Savage who was very violent, and Tilney, who really had little to do with the plot, and certainly was not one of the ring leaders. Happily Tichbourne was taken somewhat later in a boat on the river; another of the confederates who was seen with him in the boat, apparently had fallen into the river and been drowned. That man was presumed to be Windsor. If so he had lost his life in a generous attempt to save his friend.

The next day I was told that Topcliffe was about to search the dwelling of a boatman named Bell, in the neighbourhood of St. Catharine's wharf. Bell himself was in the Tower, on suspicion of having aided in Mr. Bellamy's escape from the Clink, but Topcliffe heard that Windsor was in the habit of going there frequently, and, thence he surmised that, if he had swam to shore, he might

have taken refuge there. I determined to make one of the party.

"I believe it will be a bootless errand," Topcliffe declared. "For if the man jumped into the river above the bridge, ten chances to one he was sucked under by the current just below. But we must never lose the occasion of a domiciliary search, for if one does not find the prey one is chasing, one may perhaps light on some other bird. In this way I have got hold of many a Romish priest, of whose existence I was not aware."

The house we were approaching was such a rickety, tumble-down concern, leaning over the water to such an extent, that it was not without trepidation that I entered it. After we had knocked repeatedly, the door was opened to us by a young man, who seemed greatly alarmed, when Topcliffe expounded to him the penalties of harbouring traitors. He told us his father was in prison, and his sister lay at the point of death. This was no answer to Topcliffe's questions, but it accounted for the young fellow's agitation. I begged my companion not to press him too hard, but to search the house as he proposed. Beginning at the basement, which swarmed with ferocious rats, so that no one dare enter without a light and a stout cudgel, every corner and cranny was duly examined. At length we mounted the ladder which led to the attics, but before we could enter the garret, the young man entreated us to desist from disturbing his sister's last moments. Topcliffe, considering that only as a subterfuge, instantly wrenched open the

door of the apartment. I followed him into it, and there in fact on a pallet by the window lay a young girl in her last agony, painfully gasping for breath. When she perceived us, she made a movement, as if to forbid our approach; "Away," she murmured, "leave me in peace. I believe all the teachings of the Catholic Church; I hope for pardon through the merits of Christ and the intercession of Mary; I love God with my whole soul."

Topcliffe changed colour; he glanced around and his practised eye detected the possibility of space between the wall at the back of the bed and the sloping roof, which might serve as a lurking place. But, accustomed though he was to scenes of bloodshed and butchery, he could not endure to find himself in presence of the king of terrors in a lonely garret, and therefore relinquished to me the task of examining the chamber. While he waited outside, I spoke a few words to the dying girl. I observed that she pressed to her lips a small silver crucifix which I was certain I had seen in Windsor's possession, when at Chartley. Looking closely at the wall, I saw plainly that it was merely a partition, in fact the traces of a small door were discernible in the woodwork. There was little doubt that Windsor had escaped a watery grave, that he was there within a few feet of me. My pulses throbbed fast; once more I had to decide whether I should deliver him up to justice or place myself in a most dangerous position. I had given him his life once—if he chose to risk it again, it was his

own responsibility. While I was thus debating within myself, the sight of the dying girl turned the scale in Windsor's favour. I thought when my last hour came, I should not regret having shown mercy; nay, on this alone my hope of obtaining mercy would depend.

Young Bell, who stood beside me, watched with trembling anxiety my scrutiny of the partition wall behind the bed. It also caused evident uneasiness to the dying girl; she clasped her hands beseechingly, and endeavoured to speak. But the effort was too much for her; her head sank back upon the pillow, and with the holy name of Jesus on her lips, she drew a deep breath and expired. Her brother fell on his knees by the bedside, sobbing aloud; I too knelt and breathed a silent prayer for the departing soul. Then I covered the pallid countenance with a linen cloth, and led the weeping boy from the chamber.

Having satisfied Topcliffe's inquiries, I left the house with him. "Take my word for it, Windsor is at the bottom of the Thames," he remarked as the door closed behind us.

CHAPTER XXXII.

St. Barbe relates how Babington and his fellow-conspirators were arrested, and with them the innocent inhabitants of Woxindon.

It was not long before tidings were brought to us that Babington, on leaving the *Paris Garden*, had run to Lambeth, where he crossed the river, and had betaken himself to Westminster, to the lodgings of his friend Gage. There a change of clothes was given him, and thence, with three others who joined him, he made his way under cover of night to St. John's Wood.

"They have gone to Woxindon!" I exclaimed. Topcliffe was of the same opinion. A troop of constables immediately prepared to start; I was to accompany them, at my uncle's wish, as he thought it was an opportunity for me to remove the unfavourable impression made by Windsor's escape. Topcliffe took with him some well-trained bloodhounds. "This time," he said, "I mean to revenge myself on these Bellamys, who have so often made a fool of me." As he uttered these words, he looked almost as fierce as the dogs he held in leash.

Half of the company had orders to guard the approaches to the manor-house; the other half proceeded with us to the ruin, where the search was to begin. As we drew near, we saw in the twilight, the figures of a man and a woman walking along the path which led from the ruin to the house. On the dogs being let loose, they instantly

rushed in that direction. The woman screamed with terror. "For God's sake, Remy!" we heard her exclaim, "the devil's hounds, that attacked Frith!"

"These are no supernatural dogs; be still, and they will not hurt you," the man replied.

"In the Queen's name, hold!" cried Topcliffe, advancing out of the shade of the trees. "Surrender, or these beasts shall tear you to pieces!"

"So it is you, Master Topcliffe! Is this a fresh device on your part to frighten women and children, taking a quiet stroll in the evening!" the man answered with the utmost composure.

Topcliffe replied with an oath, any means were right for persons guilty of high treason, like him and his niece, who, it was well known, harboured and supported godless conspirators who plotted against the Queen's sacred majesty.

"It is false!" shrieked the woman, who clung to Mr. Bellamy's arm. "It is false! Babington never did—"

Bellamy bade his niece hold her tongue. But the warning was too late.

Topcliffe exclaimed in triumph: "Aha! Babington! Hear how they betray their own secrets! Quite right, Babington is the one we have come to find, he and some others. Tell me this moment where these fine fellows are, for, as sure as my name is Topcliffe, if you do not deliver them up at once, you shall be cleared out of this Popish nest one and all, from the old witch down to this saucy maiden, with whom I have a long account to settle!"

"Have the goodness to call your dogs off first, they will drive my poor niece mad," Mr. Bellamy replied. I supported this request, and the two brutes, growling and snarling, were again held in leash by their master, a worse brute than they.

"Now," he demanded, "make short work of it, and show me where Babington and his confederates are."

"What reason have you to think I know their hiding place?" Bellamy asked.

"That tell-tale let it out," answered Topcliffe.

"How so?" Bellamy rejoined. "My niece only declared it was untrue that her husband had designs on the Queen's life."

"What! is Babington her husband?" cried Topcliffe. "I congratulate you on the distinguished connection!" Then, with a coarse jest, he produced the warrant of arrest, and once more demanded the instant surrender of the traitors and their leader.

Bellamy shook his head, and declared he would rather die, than deliver to the hangman an unhappy fellow-creature, whom the cruel oppression of the government had driven to some imprudent act. Telling Topcliffe to search for Babington, if he thought he was there, he moved off with his niece.

But the pursuivant would not let them go. "Stop," he cried, "if you stir a step, I will set the dogs on you. You are both my prisoners. Babington's wife and cousin will tell us many a tale, when they are on the rack in the Tower. Handcuff them both; find a pretty pair of bracelets for Miss

Bellamy, or rather Mistress Babington's little wrists, and watch both prisoners well. Now let us go to the old tower yonder; it will go hard with me if I do not unearth the whole batch, for what else would these two want wandering here at nightfall, if the dear husband and friends were not close by? So keep a sharp look-out; let all have their weapons ready, and our dogs will soon scent out the foxes."

Sentries were accordingly posted all round the old castle; torches were kindled, and a great fire made of brush wood, so that the place was almost as light as day. The red flames lit up the ivy-covered walls and threw into relief the thick stems of the old trees surrounding it.

"Now," said Topcliffe, addressing his party, "not so much as a rat can leave these walls without being seen. Have your pistols ready; shoot every one down who tries to escape, but not otherwise, for it would be a pity to deprive the hangman of a job in disposing of these Popish traitors." He then led the bloodhounds in leash around the principal ruin. They had not gone more than half-way, sniffing the ground, when they began to bay, and dragged violently at the cord, which held them in, leading us to the foot of the tower, where thick undergrowth and broken masonry filled up the moat. They stopped at a slab of stone in the wall, barking loudly and tearing the earth with their paws.

Topcliffe bade two of his men hold the dogs off; the stone was then removed, and an aperture disclosed, through which it was possible to crawl

on one's hands and feet. Into this Topcliffe shouted, calling upon Babington and any others who might be within, to come out at once to answer before the Privy Council on a charge of high treason, otherwise the bloodhounds should be let loose, who would rend them to pieces.

For a few moments not a sound was heard in the vault to which the opening gave admittance. Then voices were heard in hasty consultation; and someone said: "Let your dogs loose, Master Topcliffe; I will shoot them down one after another, and if I must fall, I shall hope to send you and some of your satellites, to appear with me before the tribunal of God, to answer for all the bloodshed and cruelty which you have shown to us harmless Catholics!"

Topcliffe gnashed his teeth with rage. "All you cursed Papists together are not worth the life of one of my dogs," he exclaimed. I will show you how we smoke such vermin out of their burrows. Pile up the brushwood before the hole, and set fire to it!"

Quickly a heap of dry sticks was raised before the opening; in another moment it would have been ablaze, had I not begged for a brief respite, while I addressed the fugitives in the vault, exhorting them in God's name to submit to their fate, which after all might not be hopeless. At any rate, if they must die, they could prepare themselves to appear before God in a more Christian manner than was possible now.

My words were not without effect. We heard them consulting together, then a voice responded:

"We surrender, but I hope we shall receive the treatment due to us as gentlemen, and that our friends will not be molested."

I would have agreed to this, but Topcliffe interposed, saying he would hear of no conditions; Babington and all his confederates must bear the consequences of their misdeeds. There was nothing to be done, but for the unfortunate conspirators to emerge from their place of concealment. Babington came first; he seemed greatly cast down and distressed on account of having brought this trouble on his friends, yet maintained a dignified demeanour. It was impossible not to feel sorry for the handsome young man, as he stood holding out his hands for the handcuffs to be put on his wrists. His hands were pinioned behind him, and fetters, fastened together with a short chain, were also put on his feet. The same was done in turn to each of the others: Barnewell, Donne, Gage and Charnock. One could not help commiserating these misguided young men, all of whom, with the exception of Charnock, a weather-beaten, gray bearded veteran, who had served with Savage under Parma, were in the first bloom of early manhood. They all met their fate with unfaltering courage; not a word of complaint escaped their lips.

Before quitting the spot, a close inspection was made of the vault, to ascertain that no confederates were remaining therein. Nothing was found save a basket of provisions and several bottles of wine, the basket, which bore the Bellamy's name and armorial bearings, afforded fatal evidence that the inhabitants of Woxindon had supplied the outlaws

with food, thus rendering themselves amenable to the law as accessories to the crime of high treason. Topcliffe, highly elated at the success of his researches, was in the best of humours; he indulged in a series of low jests at the expense of his unhappy victims, which his men received with roars of laughter.

I left the myrmidons of the law to their unseemly mirth, and approached the little group of prisoners, amongst whom Bellamy and his niece were included. The former, a stout, elderly man, called by them Uncle Remy, was endeavouring, together with Babington, to soothe the young gentlewoman, who seemed in a paroxysm of despair. "It is all my fault, all my fault," she repeated. "My folly, my disobedience, has brought this misery on our house! I persuaded Babington to plan the release of the Queen of Scots, though Father Weston dissuaded him so strongly from the enterprise! Here, at the top of yonder tower, I promised him my hand, if he would carry it out. Here, at this very spot, I met him clandestinely, again and again, though poor grandmother strictly forbade it, as she had every right to do! And now a just Providence has decreed that on this same spot he and I should be arrested. Would that we two were the only ones! Alas! a whole number share our lot, and my dear uncle amongst them—alas, alas, it is all my fault!"

To hear her lament thus pitifully was enough to move a heart of stone. She would not listen to her husband, when he assured her that before he ever saw her, he had pledged himself to deliver

Mary Stuart from prison. "If I had entreated you, you would have desisted from this wretched project," she bewailed. "Nothing was irrevocably decided then. Instead of that, I urged you on; it is my fault, my fault!"

Her uncle's attempts to console her were equally inefficacious. "Nonsense, darling," he said, "do not fret in this way. They will do nothing dreadful to me. What have I done? Only fed the hungry and given drink to the thirsty, and surely our friends, the Puritans, who make such a fuss about the Gospel, will not hang me for that. No, depend upon it, instead of putting a halter round my neck for my charity, they will put a ribbon round my knee, and I shall be a Knight of the Garter in my old age!"

Thus the kindly old man sought to divert his niece with a joke; but it was of no avail; she continued to sob convulsively, exclaiming again and again: "It was my fault, my fault!"

Soon Topcliffe and his men, who had been feasting upon the provisions found in the hiding place, called upon us to proceed to the house. Our miserable work there was soon done. Mr. Bellamy's brother, a goodnatured, harmless, but weakminded individual, met us at the gate, to learn the cause of the disturbance. He was immediately arrested. Topcliffe furthermore gave orders to rouse the old lady, who had already retired to rest, being somewhat indisposed, since he meant to take her to London in custody at once. Thereupon I protested against such unwarrantable and needless cruelty, but in vain;

the man told me he was master, and Walsingham had warned him not to heed my scruples and sensibilities. He intended to carry off the whole Woxindon brood to the Tower forthwith; he could not journey down again from London for the sake of an old hag, who was just as bad as the rest. I offered to stay behind and escort the aged lady to London on the morrow; but Topcliffe only grew more irate, and declared if she were not downstairs and ready to start in a quarter of an hour, he would drag her out of bed with his own hands. So the old serving woman was sent up to dress her mistress and bring her down into the hall.

Meanwhile Topcliffe called for wine for his men, and the hall soon re-echoed with uproarious songs and shouting. Topcliffe himself lighted a torch, and ordered Babington's wife, who seemed quite spent with grief and terror, to conduct him, manacled as she was, over the house. I followed, in the hope of acting as her protector. First of all he demanded to be shown to a chamber at the top of the house, in which her father had died, she would know which he meant. On reaching it, he commenced a close examination of the walls, striking them with a small hammer that he took from his pocket. The young lady meanwhile went and stood beneath a singular plant, which hung down from the principal beam of the ceiling. Wiping away her tears and ceasing her lamentations, she began to smile, and to count the branches of the little plant. On each of these hung a single ripe, red berry.

"One, two, three, four, five," she said. "This

one for grandmother, these two for my two uncles, these two for Babington and me." Then turning to me, she went on: "Good sir, you have been kind to us to-night; do me the favour to break off this wonderful flower! See, I cannot reach it with my fettered hands. Grandmother took so much pleasure in this plant; she thought it a portent of some great good; and listen—when the first flower opened, father died; when it was in full bloom, Mary was betrothed to Windsor and I to Anthony; when the first berry was ripe, my brother and sister had to fly from home; and now that all the fruits are matured, and the plant is withering, we shall all be taken as prisoners to the Tower, and from thence to the gallows. O marvellous, fateful flower! Reach it down, sir, and may it bring you too good luck and a blessing!"

I confess that a shiver ran over me at the strangeness of the thing, as I complied with her request, and placed the plant in her hands. She began again: "One for me, one for thee, one for Remy and one for Barthy, and the large one for Granny. O the beautiful red berries! Let us take these to them, sir—they will be so pleased!"

It was now only too evident that the trouble had turned the poor girl's head. I was horrified; it was a relief when Topcliffe, having discovered the secret cell that he was in search of, brought out from thence a gold chalice, and other things appertaining to the mass. He swore a round oath, designating them as implements of devilry and idolatry, while he consigned this valuable booty to a capacious pocket. He then declared himself ready to leave Woxindon with his prisoners.

A heartrending scene was yet to be enacted, before our departure. The venerable old gentlewoman had come down, and was sitting in the hall, feeble in body and broken in health, but courageous of heart, and resigned to the will of God. Patiently she waited, in a large armchair by the hearth, for the moment when she must bid, what she knew full well would be her last farewell, to her beloved home. When her unhappy granddaughter came in, and her restless eye and unnatural gaiety showed that her mind was deranged, a deep sigh escaped from the aged lady's breast. "More troubles, O Lord!" she murmured, raising her eyes to heaven; "yet not as I will, but as Thou wilt; give me strength to bear this cross." But when Babington's wife coming up, exhibited the wonderful plant, assigning to each of the prisoners one of the five sprigs with its blood-red berry, wishing them joy for the lucky plant, and finally asking her grandmother to fasten the plant to her bosom, since the fetters on her wrists prevented her from doing so, then tears filled the poor lady's eyes, and fell fast on the red berries in her trembling fingers. Thereupon the mood of the wretched girl suddenly changed; with a child's unreason, from silly laughter she fell to uncontrollable weeping; a pitiful sight, the more so as all the retainers of the family took part in her woe.

I was glad to hear Topcliffe give the signal to depart. The prisoners were mounted, their feet being chained together under the horses' belly. In the same way the blessed Campion was taken to London, as one of the Bellamys remarked, the thought apparently affording him no small satis-

faction; the two ladies were placed on some straw in a cart, and off we went at a quick pace by torchlight through the wood to London.

Immediately upon Babington's arrest, Topcliffe had despatched a messenger to apprise Walsingham of the fact. Hence on our arrival soon after midnight we found the greatest excitement prevailing in the city. With beat of drum the town criers had announced to the citizens that through the vigilance of the Secretary of State and the Council, a detestable conspiracy against the life of her gracious Majesty, against the religion and liberty of the country, had been discovered. The rumour, with endless exaggerations, spread like wildfire; it may be imagined what sort of reception our cavalcade met with. The populace, waxed to fury, met the prisoners with shouts of execration; while the ringing of bells and the lighting of bonfires announced far and wide that the Queen and the evangelical cause were saved, and the traitors in custody.

Thus the prisoners were conveyed to the Tower. I observed that the aged lady, who, by my request, had not been fettered, made the sign of the cross on herself and her grandchild as the iron gate of the postern closed behind them.

Deeply moved by all that I had witnessed, I turned my horse's head homewards. My uncle greeted me in good spirits. He had just heard that Salisbury and two others had been overtaken in Cheshire. All the ringleaders, excepting Windsor, were now in his hands. He expressed the wish that I should accompany him to Court on the morrow, to lay a formal report of all that had been done before the Queen.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

How St. Barbe obtained irrefutable proof of Mary Stuart's innocence, and how his zeal on her behalf was rewarded.

The next morning my uncle and I repaired betimes to Windsor, where the Court then was. Tidings of the discovery of a formidable conspiracy had already reached the Queen's ears, and she was impatient to hear further particulars. We were therefore ushered without delay by the Black Rod into the royal presence. Elizabeth was in a state of great irritation, and inclined to blame her faithful Secretary of State for having kept her in ignorance of the existence of the plot. Walsingham expounded to her the whole history of Babington's conspiracy: the design of the six young noblemen, to release the Queen of Scots from prison, and place her, with foreign succour, on the throne of England; the proposal of Savage to assassinate her Majesty, a proposal known to and sanctioned by Babington and his associates; the stratagem he had employed, watching the progress of the conspirators by introducing two of his spies into their company and affording them the means of corresponding with the royal captive in such a manner, that every scrap of writing should pass through his hands, and he should thus be enabled to lay bare the root and source of the whole mischief, as he now did to her Majesty.

The ladies and gentlemen in waiting, who, having withdrawn to a distance by Elizabeth's command, had not heard Walsingham's communi-

cation, witnessed with astonishment the outburst of rage which it elicited. And when he went on to speak of Mary Stuart's participation in the conspiracy, reading to her, or placing in her hands, portions of the letters he had intercepted especially the long letter addressed to Babington, the Queen's wrath was terrible to behold. "'s death," she exclaimed, "we hold the sword of justice, and it shall be wielded so as to strike terror to the heart of all our enemies. As for the conspirators themselves, do you see, Walsingham, that whilst they are lodged in the Tower, every sort of torture be applied to them, until they make a full confession, and reveal the names of all their accomplices. These vipers shall be trodden down; and after they have confessed, the manner in which they shall pass from life to death shall be a foretaste of the pleasures of hell. I will devise for them tortures to which the usual penalty — too lenient by half — which the law prescribes for traitors, shall be child's play in comparison."

When Elizabeth's fury had somewhat subsided, Walsingham proposed that, since sufficient evidence of Mary Stuart's guilt could not be produced, the Queen should send a confidential messenger to Chartley, before the news of the miscarriage of the plot was known there, to seize the Queen of Scots' papers. He felt no doubt that it would then be easy to prove her complicity in Savage's murderous design; in which case she must be condemned to death, and thus the life of the Queen, the security of the Protestant religion and the peace of the country would no longer be endangered, as it must needs be, so long as the breath was in that woman's body.

In this opinion — that the death of the Queen of Scots was necessary for the welfare of the Sovereign and the State, all the courtiers who were present coincided, to Elizabeth's evident gratification; although she thought good to protest that nothing would induce her to sign the death-warrant of her rival. Still, she desired that her guilt should be made manifest to all Europe, and she therefore commissioned her private secretary, Sir William Wade, and myself, to repair at once to Chartley, and seize all the correspondence and papers of her royal sister.

I should have been glad, before starting, to have asked my uncle a few questions. How could he have deduced from Mary Stuart's letter that she was a party to the design against Elizabeth's life? A falsified copy must have been given to him, or had he other letters, of which I was unaware? But he remained with the Queen, and before half an hour had elapsed, Wade and I were on our way to Chartley.

We reached the castle on the next day but one, our road leading us through Aylesbury and Buckingham. Old Sir Amias smiled grimly, when we acquainted him with the instructions we had received, and the preacher whom we found with him, invoked, in the Puritanical cant of the day, the aid of the Lord of Hosts on behalf of the royal Debora, to the confusion of all her Popish foes.

Arrangements were forthwith made for the execution of our orders on the morrow. Paulet announced to his prisoner that on the representations of her physician, permission was given for

her to take exercise on horseback; and he invited her to ride with him the next morning to Tixall, the house of Sir Walter Aston, some few miles distant, to see a buck-hunt in the park. This was done lest, suspecting something, she should at the last moment destroy any document of importance.

The Queen of Scots was as joyous as a child when she was lifted on to her palpey in the castle court the next morning. When she saw me, she beckoned me to her side, and thanked me in the most gracious manner, for having, as she supposed, used my influence with my uncle to obtain for her this alleviation of her captivity. A blush of shame rose to my cheek, and I really should have told her the true nature of my errand, had not her attention been diverted by the sound of the hunting-horns giving the signal to start. She only asked me if I knew what had become of Windsor, whom she had not seen for some time; I answered that I did not; and we set off, out at the gate and across the fields where the corn stood in sheaves, through wood and over mow, towards our destination. Everywhere the Queen was greeted by the peasantry with affectionate veneration. At one place a number of beggars had assembled, expecting to partake of her usual bounty; "Alas!" she said to them with a tearful smile, "I have nothing to give you; though a queen, I am as poor as our Lord Himself, the King of kings, when He was on earth."

As we approached Tixall Park, a party of horsemen, about 200 strong, were seen in a bend of the road near the gates. It was the sheriff of the

county, to whom we had the evening before, intimated the Queen's pleasure that he should await us there. Mary Stuart attached a different signification to the presence of the troopers. Her heart bounded at the sight of them, for she thought her friends had come for her deliverance. She was soon undeceived. On a sign from Sir Amias Paulet, the troop rode forward and surrounded us, the leader producing a royal warrant for the arrest of the two secretaries, Nau and Curle, who were taken into custody under their royal mistress' eyes, while she was told she must remain for a time at Tixall. The prisoner naturally expressed the just indignation she felt at the mean, underhand trick that had been played her, of which she did not think Sir Amias, much less myself to be capable. This she did in such a dignified, queenly manner, that I was ready to sink into the ground with confusion. She wept, indeed, but less over her own lot than at the fate of her secretaries, and others who had sacrificed themselves fruitlessly for her sake. Moreover she took all present to witness that Nau and Curle had only followed her directions, and were in no wise responsible for the letters bearing her signature. She bade a kind farewell to these two, who later on, were to betray her, through human frailty, it is true, and under stress of torture. Then she accompanied the sheriff to Tixall without a murmur.

Sir Amias and I returned immediately to Chartley, where the two secretaries were confined in separate cells, whilst we, with Wade and a locksmith from Burton, proceeded to break open all

Mary Stuart's cabinets and drawers. Every repository was ransacked, every letter and scrap of writing being placed under seal to be examined by the Privy Council. One of the first documents that I lighted upon was the draft, in French, in the Queen's own handwriting, of her letter to Babington. I was as fully resolved as ever to prevent, as far as lay in my power, the falsification of the Queen's letters which would be done, I strongly suspected, if not by my uncle, at least by his emissaries. I therefore read this draft all through with the greatest care; the copy I had made in the tavern at Barton was, through frequent perusal, so impressed on my memory, that I had no difficulty in recognizing it to be word for word the same. Not a single syllable was there which implied complicity in the design on Elizabeth's life. Wade, also, to whom I showed both the letter and my copy, declared the latter to be a *fac simile* of the former. I therefore sealed it up in a separate envelope, to be handed over to my uncle on my return to London, as a means of detecting any interpolations Philipps might make. The next day it was with a light heart that I took the road to London in the company of the two prisoners, for I was convinced that I carried with me indisputable proof of the Scottish Queen's innocence.

I found my uncle sitting in his cabinet, sunk in thought. Although it was the month of August, yet the weather was chilly, and a fire was burning brightly on the hearth. Roused from his reverie by my entrance, Walsingham made me a sign to sit down opposite to him. I did so, and, as succintly

as possible, gave him an account of our proceedings. Placing upon the table before him a thick packet containing the documents that had been seized, I inquired what was to be done with the two secretaries.

"They are to be confined in separate apartments here in my house, to be strictly watched, and allowed to hold no communication whatever with one another," he replied. "Otherwise every consideration is to be shown them. I hope by this means, to elicit from them the information I want, without having recourse to the rack. It is the old story: one catches more flies with a drop of honey than with a barrel of vinegar! We have experienced the truth of that lately, nay, this very day in the Tower. Good Heavens! how unmercifully Topcliffe tormented and tortured that man Ballard! For five consecutive hours he was hung up by rings attached to cords round his fingers, with two stones of a hundredweight each fastened to his feet, till the blood spurted from under his finger-nails, and he fell into one swoon after another. Topcliffe restored him to consciousness by holding a flaming torch under his armpits. The horrid sight haunts me still. And what was the result? Absolutely nothing upon the main point, with which we are concerned. The man acknowledged himself guilty of high treason, for seeking to dethrone Elizabeth and set the Queen of Scots at liberty; but he denied having plotted against her Majesty's life, or that Mary Stuart had been a party to any such design.

The others said just the same when examined

under torture. It is astonishing what steadfastness Babington and his associates display. Some of them whmipered and cried for mercy, but not a word could be wrung from them to criminate that woman, or at any rate they retracted it immediately, when released from the rack. One of them Bellamy, a poor imbecile, whom it was really useless to arrest, broke a blood vessel and was removed in a dying state. His niece too, Babington's youthful spouse, has gone out of her mind. Savage, a gloomy fanatic, confesses that it was his intention to have slain the Queen, but declares he was solicited thereto by that wretch Gifford, who assured him, by way of incentive, that Dr. Allen and other divines approved the act as one of great merit, the the only means to reform the State.[1]) He denies however most emphatically that the Scottish Queen knew of or sanctioned it. Thus they all deny what it is essential to me to assert: Mary Stuart's complicity in the plot against Elizabeth's life."

"It is my conviction that they all speak the truth on that point," I rejoined.

"What!" exclaimed my uncle angrily. "Have we not her letter and Babington's, both of which prove the contrary?"

"It may be so if you have other letters of which I know nothing, in addition to the long letter of the 17th of July, and I conclude you have, from what I heard you say to the Queen on the terrace at Windsor. That letter of the 17th of July certainly contains nothing to incriminate the writer," I replied.

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[1]) Ibid. II. p. 383.

My uncle gave me a searching look. "I hope, Francis," he said after a moment's pause, "that you do not mean to infer that I intended to mislead the Queen on that occasion."

"Certainly not willingly," I replied, "but the wisest man may be deceived by a rogue. But I will not call in question the sagacity and knowledge of the world for which you enjoy so wide-spread a reputation. Doubtless you possess other documents besides those to which I refer."

"And supposing we had no other written evidence save that letter and Babington's answer, what should you — assuming that you were the appointed counsel for the Queen of Scots — allege against it?" asked my uncle, in a half contemptuous, half angry manner.

"In the character of counsel for the Queen of Scots, I should naturally first of all request to see the letters on which the whole charge against her rests."

My uncle rose, and unlocking a strong box, he took out two letters written in cipher, together with a deciphered transcript in Philipp's hand. These letters he showed me, retaining them in his possession the whole time; then he deposited them again in the place whence he took them, locked it, and put the key in his pocket. "One cannot be too careful in preserving documents of such importance," he said. "But here are faithful copies, whose accuracy can be tested by a court of law by comparison with the originals. Now I must beg the learned counsel to note the passages in both

letters which are marked with red ink, and tell me what can be said in his client's defence." [1])

Walsingham threw himself back in his chair, and occupied himself apparently in watching the dancing flames and the expiring embers on the hearth. I applied my whole mind to the examination of the letters. In Babington's there were certainly two very unfortunate passages. After speaking of Parma's meditated invasion, and of Mary's release, he mentioned as a part of the scheme *'the despatch of the usurping competitor.'* Another passage, also marked by my uncle, ran thus — the words are deeply impressed on my memory — *'Myself, with ten gentlemen of quality, and a hundred followers, will undertake the deliverance of your person from the hands of your enemies; and for the despatch of the usurper, from obedience to whom, by the excommunication of her, we are made free, there be six noble gentlemen, all my private friends, who for the zeal they bear the Catholic cause and your majesty's service, will undertake the tragical execution.'*

On reading this, I was compelled to own, that if this letter was, indeed, as was alleged, genuine, Mary Stuart must at any rate have been privy to the murderous design. I then took up the letter which she had written in answer. If this copy, placed by Walsingham in my hands, were as accurate as he considered it, she not only knew of it, but approved of and sanctioned it. In Philipp's transcript mention was frequently made of 'the

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[1]) For the proof of the manifest falsification of the letters on the strength of which Mary Stuart was condemned cf. Hosack 2, p. 348—372.

undertaking of the six noble gentlemen.' For instance, one of the questions she put to the conspirators was. 'By what means do the six gentlemen deliberate to proceed?'. Further on there was a request that the six gentlemen would not set to work until the affairs were prepared, and forces in readiness within and without the realm; finally a long passage to the intent that it would be well for the said gentlemen to have always at Court sundry scoutmen provided with good horses, to bring tidings with all diligence to Chartley as soon as the design be executed, that she might be apprised of it and set free, before her keeper should have warning of the existence of the said designment. And the reason given for this request was, that there could be no certain day appointed when the plan could be carried out at Court, and that it was imperative that she should be set at liberty immediately after its accomplishment. Wherefore two or three couriers should be despatched to Chartley by divers ways, at the same time it would be needful to endeavour to cut off the ordinary post, etc.

It was quite possible that the more general mention of a design on the part of the six gentlemen might have escaped me when the deciphered copy was made at Burton. But this latter passage was not of a nature or of a length to be overlooked; it almost filled a whole page in Philipp's transcript. Nor was a word of it to be found in the original draft. There could be no doubt that the whole passage was a forgery. And when I compared it with the context, I wondered that my uncle's keen

eye had not immediately detected so clumsy a deceit. His eager desire, on political ground, to connect Mary Stuart with this plot, must have led him to heed nothing but the passages marked, I said to myself. But the suspicion forced itself upon me, was he not aware that he was making use of a forgery? May it not even have been by his orders that the interpolation was made? I know that politicians were often unscrupulous as to the means they employed, but I did not like to believe that my uncle would resort to such unworthy expedients. Still the whole matter must be expounded to him; no agreeable task at the best, for no man would like the fabric he has carefully constructed, and on which so much depended, to be overthrown like a house of cards. However there was no help for it, since the honour and the life of an innocent person were at stake.

"You have been a long time deliberating," Walsingham said at length. "What is the verdict? Not very favourable to her Majesty of Scotland, to judge by the funereal countenance of her counsel."

"It is decidedly favourable for Mary Stuart," I replied.

Walsingham leant back in his chair with forced composure. "You surprise me," he said. "I am anxious to hear what can be urged in defence of the accused; forewarned, forearmed, you know."

"To me it appears most simple and obvious. I can prove the falsification of both letters," I answered.

My uncle turned pale, but otherwise betrayed no emotion. Looking sharply at me, he said: "I

must either be deceived or a deceiver. Neither opinion is flattering. But let me hear your proofs."

"I believe I can give direct and conclusive proof that the Queen's letter has been falsified; in regard to Babington's, the evidence is only presumptive. But if the Queen's letter is not genuine, the same will probably be true of his."

"It may possibly be so," Walsingham remarked. "This I concede, that finding the one spurious greatly weakens the evidence of the other. But now give me your proofs that the Queen's letter is falsified, and mind, the proofs must be incontestable!"

"The evidence is both internal and external," I resumed. "This long passage that you have marked is the one on which every thing turns, and it is plainly an interpolation."

My uncle interrupted me. "There are other passages marked, which taken in connection with Babington's letter, clearly prove Mary Stuart's guilt."

"Undoubtedly," I replied, "supposing Babington's letter to be genuine, but if it is spurious, as I believe I can prove it to be, then the expression, *the design of the six gentlemen* has no special significance. It would simply mean the deliverance of the captive. I do not hesitate to affirm that this long passage is a forgery, for it is directly at variance with another part of the letter. Listen to this." I then read aloud the portion of the prisoner's letter wherein she gives strict directions that immediately after the accomplishment of the design upon Elizabeth's life, couriers should be sent to Chartley, and

then, but not until then, her release be attempted. This I begged him to compare with the following words, which occurred somewhat later: '*If you take me out of this place, be well assured to set me in the midst of a good army, or some very good strength, where I may safely stay until the assembling of your forces, and of the said foreign succours. It were sufficient cause given to the Queen, in catching me again, to enclose me in some hold, out of which I should never escape, if she did use me no worse, and to pursue with all extremity those that assisted me, which would grieve me more than all the unhappiness might fall upon myself.*' "How," I asked, "are we to reconcile this passage with the one which precedes it! Mary directs that, on the successful accomplishment of the design, the news of her rival's death is to be the signal for her release from prison. A few lines further on, she commands that precautions be taken, lest the Queen — who has been assassinated, mark you — should catch her again, and treat her worse than before! If this is not a contradiction, I never saw one; one of the two passages is distinctly a forgery. Strike out the one that is marked, and it will appear perfectly natural that Mary Stuart should be anxious to be protected from the Queen's anger until the landing of Parma's troops."

Walsingham had listened to me with growing uneasiness. He could not contest the force of my arguments, so he tried to set them aside with a sneer.

"Well done, my lord Advocate!" he said. "You would make your fortune at the bar! Only unfortunately, as the letter is before us, inspection

of the original will show that so long a paragraph could not possibly have been interpolated —"

"Not unless it was re-written from beginning to end by the forger," I remarked.

"Do not interrupt me," Walsingham said, angrily knitting his brows. "Moreover, an apparent contradiction in a woman's letter by no means proves it to be a forgery. Some word is probably omitted, overlooked by the decipherer, which would entirely alter the sense. Besides, logic is not a woman's strong point."

"The letter before us bears every mark of forethought and deliberation. But listen to my other proof. Amongst the papers belonging to Mary Stuart that were seized, there was, happily for her, a draft in her own handwriting of that very letter to Babington. There is not a word of all that in it. I brought the letter in a separate envelope. Here it is." I detached the precious document from the packet, and handed it to my uncle.

He took it eagerly. I noticed that his hand shook, and his countenance fell.

"Has any one except Wade seen this draft?" he inquired.

"Only Queen Mary's secretaries," I replied.

"Nau and Curle will not give me much trouble, and Wade is one of Mary's bitterest enemies," my uncle rejoined. "Besides, after all, a rough draft proves nothing; it may easily have been altered afterwards."

"I know that this was not," I exclaimed triumphantly. "Here is deciphered the copy of the letter, which I wrote from Philipps dictation at

the *Green Dragon;* it is word for word the same. Now is the falsification proved or no?" Thereupon I gave the copy to my uncle, that he might collate it with the other. He ran his eye over them, complimented me sarcastically on my skill in the defence, and remarked it was well that the English law allowed no counsel for the prisoner in a charge of high treason, or these documents in the hands of her lawyers, might give us some trouble. Then he enjoined on me, for the good of the State, to preserve strict silence on the subject.

This speech revealed to me that Walsingham was a party to this forgery, that he might even have given orders for it, and intended to make use of it for the condemnation of an innocent person. I broke forth in indignant expostulations against such flagrant injustice, and declared my determination to proclaim the truth at whatever cost to myself.

"Fool that you are!" exclaimed Walsingham, unable to control his anger. "Would you betray your uncle, and put him to public shame, and ruin your country, which cannot be at peace while that woman lives? See here, I will make short work of your incontrovertible proofs." So saying he crushed the papers in his hand, and tossed them in the fire.

I will not recall our mutual recriminations. They ended in my being placed in custody in my uncle's house, to consider whether, within forty-eight hours, I would swear to preserve secrecy, and beg pardon on my knees, or be consigned to the Tower for aiding and abetting Windsor's escape.

At the end of that time Walsingham came to me, and asked if I had come to a better mind, and would comply with his wishes. I told him my resolution was unchanged, and I begged him not to stain his conscience with the blood of an innocent person. He would not listen to a word, but said: "A truce to your entreaties! However, before I send you to the Tower — whence, be it remembered, death will be your only release — you shall have a trial of what imprisonment on bread and water is, here in this house. I will give you a month's probation; if you still presist in your obstinacy, in the middle of September you shall be transferred to a living grave." I answered nothing and he left me.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

My wife relates her adventures on the flight from England, and what befell her on her arrival in Paris.

The time has now come, as my husband reminds me, to let St. Barbe rest, while I continue our narrative, and acquaint the gentle reader with the incidents connected with my flight from England.

I must return to that July night A. D. 1586, when, standing on the deck of the *Jeanette*, beside my brother Frith, Miss Cecil, and my Uncle Robert, with a heavy heart I watched the skiff that had brought us thither disappear in the darkness. No sooner had we got on board the brig than she weighed anchor, and with all sails set, made for the mouth of the Thames. We had not been more than half an hour under way, when three shots sounded from Gravesend; they were repeated from the forts we had just passed.

"Aha!" said our captain, "that was meant for us! We did not leave Gravesend a minute too soon; had we been any later the guns there would have obliged us to stop. News must have come from London about the contraband goods I have on board, and I shall not be surprised if they send one of their ships after us. They are welcome to do it; the *Jeanette* can run a race with any English craft, so long as they do not put out from Sheerness to take us. All lights must be extinguished, and a sharp lookout kept. The ladies had better go down below."

Miss Cecil and I betook ourselves to the little cabin; Uncle Robert and Frith remained on deck, doing what they could to assist the crew. It was an anxious time for us; for presently we knew from the rolling of the vessel that we had got out of fresh water, and were about to encounter the dangers of a passage across the Channel. From time to time Frith came down and told us what was taking place. Two vessels seemed to be pursuing us, he said; the lights on their bows and on the masts were visible, but our skipper was in good spirits. At day-break we passed Margate. The harbour master must have received orders to stop us, for a vessel was cruising exactly in the track which ships from London generally took.

Our position had become rather critical. There were two ships following us, and the one from Margate, which was just in our course, signalled to us to lay to. Our captain swore a nautical oath, and said one would think he had the Queen of Scots herself on board! But before he gave in, he would lead the English a jolly chase; so he gave orders to hoist all sail and steer to the north-east.

When the cruiser from Margate perceived that no heed was paid to her signals, we saw a flash and a cloud of white smoke issue from one of her port-holes, and a cannon ball struck the water near the bow of the *Jeanette*. But a stiff west wind filled our shrouds; the vessel lay over on her side almost as if she would capsize, as she ploughed through the foaming waves, which dashed over the deck, inundating us with salt spray. Shot after shot came after us, but only one hit, and that did

little damage, merely tearing a hole in the main-stay sail, as I think the sailors called it. For an hour or so we were in great jeopardy, for the three ships pursued us with all their canvass furled; but we outran them, and ere long they fell behind and were gradually lost to sight.

We thanked the Blessed Mother of God, and our brave skipper too, when, all danger past, we landed safe and sound at Dunkirk. Miss Cecil gave him a valuable ring, in consideration of which he procured us a suitable means of conveyance to Paris, where we were next to try our fortunes.

The welcome we received was of the warmest nature, when, on our arrival in the French metropolis, we sought out the Jesuit College, and delivered the letter wherewith Father Weston had furnished us. The name of Woxindon was familiar to the Fathers, as that of a house where many of their brethren in religion had found a refuge. And when we spoke to them of Edmund Campion, of Persons, and other venerated Confessors who had been our guests, they said repeatedly, how rejoiced they were to have an opportunity of returning in some slight degree the kindness we had shown to their brethren. They were also delighted to hear that the young lady with us was a daughter of Lord Burghley, the inveterate enemy of the Jesuits, and indeed, of all Catholics, and that by God's grace, she had had the courage to forsake home and country for the sake of the true faith. The Father Provincial, a venerable, white-haired old man, as well as the Father Rector, lifted up their hands in joyful wonder, and would not listen to a word Miss

Cecil said, when with tears she entreated them to forgive the part her father had acted, in shedding the blood of Campion and other martyrs.

Meanwhile the lay-brothers had prepared a repast for us in one of the parlours, to which my little brother Frith did great credit, for he was in high spirits, the Rector having consented to take him into the College. And when, on the sound of a bell, merry voices were heard in the courtyard below, and Frith, looking out of the window, saw a number of boys playing at football, nothing would do but that he must join at once his future comrades. To this the Fathers had no objection; the Rector went down to introduce him to his playfellows, and the boy was in such a hurry that he would hardly wait to bid us good-bye.

Thus for the present Frith was provided for. About uncle Robert we had no cause for anxiety. He intended, after he had seen us safely housed in Paris, to take service under Parma in the Netherlands, for he was still in the prime of life, and well trained in the use of arms. But what was to become of us two girls? we timidly asked the Fathers. There was no difficulty about that, they said; a messenger had already been sent to the Benedictine nuns in Montmartre, who would willingly take us in. Thereupon I thought myself obliged to say that I had no wish to become a nun; on the contrary, I was engaged to be married. I could not help colouring as I said that; but the Father Provincial answered smilingly he would not compel, or even persuade us to embrace the religious life, for to enter a convent without a vocation was

to ensure misery for oneself and for others. We were only to be the nun's guests for two or three days, until a home could be found for us in the house of some persons of quality. While we were still at table, a note of kind invitation came from the lady-abbess for the English ladies, and we immediately proceeded to the Convent, after taking grateful leave of the good Fathers. Uncle Robert remained behind, as he was to stay under their hospitable roof for a few days.

At the door of the Convent we were met by the Abbess, an aged and venerable lady, who welcomed us with motherly kindness, and knew how to set us at our ease at once. Taking us by the hand, she conducted us through the long, cool corridors into the garden, bright with summer flowers, and shaded by spreading yew trees. At the entrance there stood a time-honoured image of the Mother of God, holding the Divine Child in her arms, looking down graciously upon us from a bosquet of elegant foliage and fragrant lilies. In passing we paused to kneel for a moment, and utter the prayer the Church places on her children's lips:

Nos cum prole pia, Benedicat Virgo Maria.

The Abbess led us to an arbour, where the whole community were assembled at recreation, and introduced us to them, saying: "See, my children, God has sent us these young ladies from England, who for love of the Holy Church have left father and mother, brother and sister, house and home; what will their reward be? Tell us, Sister Hedwig, our youngest novice!"

At these words a youthful nun, about the age of my Sister Anne, rose up and looking at us with smiling blue eyes, replied: "Our Lord Himself tells us, Reverend Mother: a hundredfold and eternal life."

"True, Sister, *centuplum et vitam eternam!* Now let us do our part to prove the truth of the words." Then she bade the lay-sister bring fruit and cakes, the nuns laid their needlework aside, all tongues were unloosed, and we chatted merrily until a graver topic was introduced, and with deep interest and sympathy our recital of the woes of Catholics in England was listened to by all present.

At length the bell sounded for Vespers, and the Sisters betook themselves to the choir. We followed them into the solemn stillness of the sanctuary, dimly lighted by painted windows. Fixing my eyes on the tabernacle, I fervently thanked our hidden God for the protection afforded us on our flight, as well as for the unexpected welcome we had met with amongst those who were dedicated to Him. Then the organ began, and its swelling notes filled the church, while the psalms and antiphons of the day, sung in choir, sounded to me like the song of angels. A sense of repose and peace came over me; I had never felt so far from earth and so near Heaven. And when, the next morning, I assisted for the first time in my life at High Mass, and witnessed the impressive ceremonial the Church appoints for the celebration of the unbloody sacrifice of the New Testament, as the clouds of incense ascended at the *sanctus*, tears of devotion ran down my cheeks, and heavenly

consolation filled my heart. Miss Cecil, who knelt beside me, was not less affected than myself. Afterwards she said to me: "May God forgive those deluded ones who stigmatize as idolatrous the elevating and beautiful ritual of the Catholic Church! And those, who in the name of liberty of conscience, destroy the monasteries, and drag their inmates out of these dwellings of peace! Oh how happy should I count myself, if I could spend my whole life before the altar of the Lord! How different to attendance at the Court of Elizabeth, in which my early youth was past!"

After a few days passed in tranquillity and peace, we heard that the Jesuit Fathers had found a suitable domicile for us. Mendoza, the Spanish ambassador, offered to receive us into his house as companions for his wife. By this act he took a truly christian revenge on Lord Burghley, who two years previously had caused him to be ignominiously dismissed from his post of ambassador in England. Miss Cecil would have preferred to remain at Montmartre, since she had never felt so happy in her life as she did there. In fact, she begged the Abbess to admit her as a postulant, but the old lady was too wise to allow her to take such a step in the first flush of youthful fervour. "If in a year's time you are still of the same mind, and you feel that only within these quiet walls will your heart find rest," she said to her, "then come, my child, and you shall try your vocation with us." I too, was so sorry to bid the nuns good-bye, that I almost regretted having pledged my troth to Windsor. It was with a heavy heart that we

followed our new guardian to his palace on the banks of the Seine. On the same day my uncle Robert left Paris to join the army at Brussels.

Nothing of importance occurred during several weeks. Count Mendoza and his wife treated us like their own daughters, but I felt uneasy at receiving no tidings from my country. I had written from the Convent to Windsor, no reply reached me, however; and from my host I could learn nothing definite as to the progress of affairs in England.

At length the glorious Feast of the Assumption came. We received Holy Communion at an early hour in the private chapel of the embassy, and afterwards accompanied the Count and Countess to solemn High Mass at Notre Dame, where the Archbishop officiated with great pomp and ceremony. But neither the soul-stirring music, nor the other accessories of christian worship availed that morning to inspire my heart with festive joy. It was filled with sad forebodings, and I felt impelled again and again, to invoke for my loved ones in England our Lady's powerful protection.

On our return to the embassy, a courier was waiting with despatches from England. After what appeared to me a very long time, I was summoned to Mendoza's cabinet, whither he had withdrawn to peruse his letters. I had a presentiment of misfortune, and my fears were confirmed at the sight of his grave countenance.

"The messegner has brought bad news from England," I cried. "The scheme for releasing Mary Stuart has failed — tell me all, Count; the worst cannot be as bad as this painful suspense."

"It was to tell you all that I sent for you, Miss Bellamy," he answered. "It is true, the plan for setting free the Queen of Scots has again been unsuccessful. This time, I fear, the consequences for her will be fatal. The greater number of the conspirators have been arrested."

"Windsor? and Babington?" I inquired eagerly.

"Babington, but not Windsor," Mendoza replied. "But what touches you most nearly is, that, through Babington having unfortunately been taken at Woxindon, all your relatives have been thrown into prison. Chateauneuf speaks in his letter of two gentlemen and two gentlewomen."

"What!" I exclaimed, bursting into tears, "the barbarians have had the cruelty to take my dear old grandmother, and poor uncle Barty, who is as simple as a child, to the Tower! I must go to them, I must go to London immediately, to see what can be done for them. There is not a soul to succour them. Our cousin Page is a miserable apostate, who only wants to get our estate for himself. Help me, for mercy's sake, to get back to London! You know what our prisons are, you know by the Queen's command, the prisoners are allowed nothing but bread and water, and rotten straw. Every alleviation must be paid for heavily by the captives or their friends. Alas! my poor grandmother, and my sister too, whose health is much shaken, will perish miserably in the course of a few weeks, if I cannot hasten to their assistance."

The ambassador listened to me patiently. Then he said: "If you are recognized, you will only share their fate. Believe me, Lord Burghley will never forgive you for having facilitated his daughter's flight. A better plan would be to write to Chateauneuf, and ask him to send some one to look after the prisoners."

"No, that will never do! If needs be, I would rather die with them, than remain here without stirring a hand to help them. I simply could not endure it, and if I have to beg my way, to London I must go. How could one of Chateauneuf's agents care properly for my unhappy friends?"

Mendoza was touched; but he said nothing must be done in a hurry, we must think the matter over. He also desired me to ask the advice of my confessor; if he approved of my resolution, and I still adhered to it on the morrow, he would provide me with all that I needed. Accordingly I betook myself to the Jesuit College, and submitted my project to the Father Provincial for his decision. He sanctioned it fully, and gave me his blessing, only he asked me to say nothing to Frith, of whose behaviour he spoke with great praise, about my departure. He would tell him of it in due time, and bid him pray for the success of my undertaking.

The next morning Mendoza gave his consent, and supplied me with good advice and the necessary funds, in cash and bills of exchange on a London banker. Before nightfall I left Paris, in the suite of a gentleman of rank, who with his wife, was journeying to London.

CHAPTER XXXV.

My wife gains access to the Tower, where she hears and sees much to surprise and sadden her.

On arriving at my destination, I lost no time in making my way to the Tower. It was with a heavy heart that I approached its gloomy portals, clad in my oldest, simplest gown, and carrying in my arms a basket filled with small loaves, to give myself the appearance of a maid-servant. I had no difficulty in passing the guard at the postern, at the entrance of the footway that crosses the broad moat; at the Middle tower and the Bye-ward tower, which give admittance to the inner circumference, I was also permitted to pass unchallenged. But when I was about to go through the frowning gateway of the Bloody tower, into the interior of the fortress, one of the watchmen suddenly lowered his halberd, and pointing it directly at my breast, called to me to halt. Startled and alarmed, I nearly let fall the basket I was carrying; but one of the other soldiers interfered, saying to his comrade: "Out upon you for an unmannerly knave! Is that the way to deal with a fair maiden? Let her go by; I will wager it is our commandant's new serving-woman. I did not think Madam would have got another so soon. By my troth,' tis the third since midsummer! We shall see how long she can put up with the old dragon. Go on your way, mistress; but first you must give me a kiss or pay me a groat as your ransom."

I willingly put the required coin into the man's hand, and with a sense of relief hastened through the dark archway into the open space, in the midst of which rose the so-called White tower, flanked with four turrets. The watchman's speech contained a suggestion which was a god-send to me. I resolutely walked over the turf to the residence of the Commandant, or Lieutenant of the Tower, as he was called, and knocked at the door. It was opened by an elderly serving-man, who asked my business. With a beating heart I said I had heard that a serving-maid was wanted, and had come after the place. He scanned me closely from head to foot, and left me standing in the hall, while he went into the kitchen, whence the cook, a tall, raw-boned woman, presently issued, and subjected me to a similar scrutiny. Finally she fetched a thin, sharp featured lady, the expression of whose restless eye bespoke a love of fault finding and scolding. She too looked me over, and then in a high pitched falsetto voice, asked my name. To have given my real name would have been to defeat my object and hazard my liberty; so I gave as my own my mother's maiden name, Mary Forster.

The lady began to find fault immediately, protesting against the use of so Popish an appellation, which recalled the dreadful days of the Spanish queen, the persecutor of the people of the Lord, and reminded her too of the Queen of Scots, who enveigled into her toils a party of young men, and had nearly been the cause of deluging England with

blood. Only on condition that I would change my name for one of the biblical names of the Old Testament, such as Sarah, Rebecca or Ruth, would she consent to take me. I expressed my readiness to be called by whatever appellation she might please to assign me. This pacified her for a time; she gave me the name of Ruth. Then a fresh difficulty arose; she saw my white hands, and cried out that I was surely an impostor, no honest menial. I acknowledged that until then there had been no necessity for me to earn my bread, but that family misfortunes and the successive loss of all my near relatives within a short period, obliged me to take service. If she would engage me, she would find me trusty and industrious, and willing to do the roughest work.

Thereupon she consented to try me, and I was told what would be required of me. The tasks enumerated were neither few nor light; yet I could hardly conceal my joy when my mistress, Lady Hopton (the wife of Sir Owen Hopton, to whom the command of the Tower, with its hundreds of prisoners, was committed) mentioned amongst my other duties that of looking after the female Catholic prisoners. This determined me that it should not be my fault if I did not remain there; so I followed the cook into the kitchen, rolled up my sleeves, put on an apron, and set about washing the dishes and sweeping the house.

As I was descending the stairs, after putting in order the Council Chamber, where a meeting of ministers was shortly to be held, I met my master, Sir Owen, a rough-looking, thick-set man, who was

coming up, accompanied by Walsingham. I could not help overhearing their conversation. "So you want me to find board and lodging for your nephew St. Barbe, Sir Francis," my master said. "Well, it can be done for the sum you mention. And the other members of the Privy Council are to know nothing about it? Very good, a written order from yourself will be enough. There is a cell close by vacant now, the one occupied by Bellamy, who died from the injuries he received on the rack. Of course we gave out that he strangled himself; but, between ourselves, he died a most happy death, with a Popish canticle to the Virgin on his lips. Well, he was a poor simpleton at the best."

The effect these words produced on me may be imagined. I was obliged to lean on the balusters, to keep myself from falling. I could not conceal my agitation from the two men, who had now turned the corner. The Lieutenant attributed my tears to his wife's scolding, and told me I must get accustomed to her spiteful tongue. I put my apron up to my eyes, but not before Walsingham's keen eye had rested on me. "Who may that be?" he inquired.

"Our new maid. My wife has a fresh one every week, so I am tired of asking their names," Hopton replied, as they went on. And I was thankful to hear him say, in answer to Walsingham's remark that I looked more like a gentlewoman than a serving-maid, as for that, no one of gentle birth would stay an hour in their house.

They then passed into the corridor, and I went back to the kitchen, where the cook, who had a

kinder heart than one would imagine from her rough exterior, likewise ascribed my woe-begone appearance to my having incurred her mistress' displeasure. The old skin-flint, she declared, was getting quite intolerable; then she advised me to go back into the city at once, and fetch my chest with my clothes. She gave me a pass, which had served my predecessor, exhorting me not to lose it, or I might have difficulty in getting in again, and above all to return punctually by four o'clock, as the gates were closed at that hour.

Whilst I was crossing the Tower Green, I saw a young man coming towards the house I had just left, between two sheriff's officers. His countenance was pale and haggard, his clothes torn and soiled, his arms were pinioned behind his back. I recognized him instantly, it was Babington. A pang went through my heart at the sight of him. What a contrast he looked to the handsome young fellow who espoused my poor sister? I hurried away with averted face, lest he should identify me, and unwittingly say something that would compromise me. Alas! I must be prepared for sad sights in that terrible prison-house, and must be most cautious to preserve my disguise.

That morning I had observed in Water Lane, close to the Tower, the shop of a dealer in second-hand clothes. Thither I now directed my steps, to purchase the linen and other clothes I should require in my character of serving-woman. I also bought some yards of cambric and fine holland; last of all I procured a stout chest, painted blue and adorned with birds and flowers, in which I

packed the various articles I had purchased. The dealer, who was well content with the bargain he had made, sent a lad with me to carry the chest. Rachel, my fellow-servant, helped me to take it up to my chamber, and I then gave her the cambric and cloth, with all that was necessary for a bodice. She did not say much, but I saw that my gift had won her heart. And when, half an hour later, my mistress came into the kitchen, and began to rate me about something, Rachel stepped between us, and told her to her face that if she did not desist from her nagging, we would both leave her that same night. Thereupon the sour-visaged lady cast up her eyes, and expressed her wonder that a christian maid-servant under the Gospel should venture to rebel against just authority. Were we plotting a conspiracy against her, as the godless Papists had done against the Queen's Majesty?

As soon as she had gone, I took the occasion to put some questions to my companion about the conspiracy of which Lady Hopton had spoken. "What," she said, "has nothing been heard of it in your village? Did you not hear how Babington and his associates wanted to murder the Queen, set Mary Stuart on the throne, deliver the country to the Spaniards, and uproot the Gospel everywhere. And as true as I am a living woman, no one would expect it of the lads, they look so young and so good humoured. I will show them to you; they are brought here every day to the Council Chamber to be examined, in the hope that they will give evidence against the Scottish Queen. But hitherto they have not done so,

though they have been mercilessly tortured, so the clerk told me. It is said the Jesuits have given them some charm which prevents them from feeling pain."

"I was told that some gentlewomen had been arrested with them," I said timidly, standing so that she could not see my face.

She replied: "Yes, two; old Mistress Bellamy and her daughter or granddaughter, who is said to be Babington's wife. They are confined over there in the Cold Harbour, that old weather-beaten tower by the White tower. You can see it from the kitchen window, and from your little chamber you can see the window of their cell. To-morrow we shall have to take them their dinner; they are both sick, the young one I think is the worst of the two."

At this point Rachel went away elsewhere, and in truth I had no wish to question her further. While I was occupied in my work, a man entered the kitchen, whom I recognized as the boatman, Bill Bell, who had taken us down to Gravesend.

I made myself known to him, and he exclaimed aloud in his astonishment at finding me there. But I silenced him with a gesture, and he took his cue in a moment. "I understand," he said with a low whistle. "But be on your guard; you will find this a more dangerous place than the Thames. Yet our trip that night nearly brought me to the gallows. However nothing could be proved against me, so, as I am no Papist, I was let off with six months imprison-

ment for smuggling. I could not stand the confinement, so I offered my services to Sir Owen, and the arrangement suits us both admirably; he has not to pay a man, and I have the opportunity of earning many an honest penny. For this I must say: the Papists are very liberal with their money, when it is a question of helping their priests and co-religionists."

"You shall not find me less liberal," I said, slipping a piece of gold into his hand. "Take that to begin with. Now tell me what can be done, what you can help me to do for my poor grandmother, my sister, my uncle, and the other prisoners?"

The man, surprised at receiving from me so large a gratuity, promised to aid me to the utmost of his power, provided there was no attempt to release any prisoner, for he was bound by oath to help no one to escape. He promised at my request to acquaint my relatives with my presence; otherwise, when I went to carry their food to them the next day, my secret might be divulged. "For the rest," he added, "mark you, inside the Tower a golden key opens every door. I really believe, if one had gold enough, the gates of the Tower itself would unclose at one's bidding; but it would be a matter of great difficulty on account of the number of warders to be corrupted. But within the walls a yellow coin such as you have just given me is as good as a skeleton key. Good Heavens! I have learnt a good deal, since I have been here. Over there in the Martin tower, at the north-east corner of the inner enclosure, a Jesuit named William

Crichton has been immured for years. Almost every night that man is conducted either to the good Earl of Arundel in the Beauchamp tower, or to some other dungeon, where he says mass for the Popish prisoners, and administers the sacrament. He gave your uncle the sacrament and anointed him, although it was here in the Bell tower that he died, and the only means of access to it is through this house. Rachel was kind enough to open the doors for us, and she made a very good thing of it."

Here we were interrupted, and Bill went away, after repeating his promise to apprise the prisoners in the Cold Harbour of my proximity. That evening, when I looked from my attic window at the cell where my dear ones were confined, I could not sufficiently thank God for having so visibly guided and directed my steps during the past day. Long did I stand gazing at the gray walls and towers, lighted up by the clear moonlight. Opposite to me on the green was the church of St. Peter *ad vincula*, and on a slight elevation in front of the church I could see the block, where the unhappy Anne Boleyn paid the price of her evil deeds. What a record of deeds of horror surrounded me on all sides, but again, what heroic examples of Christian fortitude. With the thought of these I consoled myself as I lay down to sleep, and above all with the knowledge that almost every night the Holy Sacrifice was offered within the precincts of this cruel fortress, and fervent supplications ascended to Heaven from the lips of my Catholic brethren.

I need hardly say how much I longed, on the

morrow, for the time when I should have to carry their dinner to the female prisoners. But another piece of intelligence awaited me before then.

It must not be supposed that, although I have for so long said nothing about my betrothed, anxiety as to his fate was not one of the bitterest drops in my cup of sorrows. I was, however, completely impotent, for had I known with certainty that he had escaped, I should not have known where to seek him. I could do nothing but wait. I was resolved to be true to him, and as I could not in my present character, wear on my finger the ring he had given me beneath the wonderful flower at Woxindon, I fastened it round my neck on a ribbon, and wore it on my heart. If on the other hand, he had been drowned in the Thames, as was generally thought, I could only weep for him and pray for him, hope to be reunited to him hereafter, and submit to the decrees, grievous though they were, of an all-wise and all-loving Providence. I prayed earnestly for resignation, for I believed that my dear Edward had found a watery grave, and thus escaped the terrible death that awaited his associates only too surely. But I did not altogether give up hope, for youth and love do not readily despair.

And now, quite unexpectedly, I was to learn what had befallen him. Bill Bell found an opportunity of telling me he had executed my commission, and that if I was in a position to pay for it, he could provide my relatives in the Cold Harbour with bedding, and other little indulgences. To this I gladly assented, and gave the old sea-farer, who

I knew was to be trusted, a good round sum for the purpose. Then he said; "Miss Bellamy, after I left you yesterday, it occurred to me there was something else you would like to hear." Dropping his voice to a whisper, he asked whether I was not betrothed, or perhaps married to Windsor, who had gone down the river to Gravesend with me? And when I eagerly answered yes, he told me that my lover was not drowned, as, fortunately for him, his enemies assumed, but had been taken out of the water in an unconscious state, and concealed in a garret at the top of his house by his son, at great risk to himself, for, as the reader already knows, Topcliffe presently came to search the dwelling. Thus Windsor, alone of all the chief conspirators had been able to elude the vigilance of the pursuivants.

"Where is he at present?" I inquired, once more breathing freely.

"In the attic, where my daughter Maud died. It would be impossible, or at any rate highly imprudent, for him to try to leave England just now. The harbours are so strictly watched, and the vessels so closely searched, that a hundred chances to one he would be caught. After the lapse of some time, when the wretched conspiracy is no longer present to men's minds, he may make the attempt. Meanwhile he is quite as comfortable in his attic as he would be in the Tower, and next week he will be able to see his associates taken to Westminster, to hear their sentence. Shall I send him any message from you, when my boy next comes to see me?"

I reflected for a moment, and then said no, for I thought the knowledge that I was here might tempt my betrothed to do something rash. But I thanked my informant for all he had done for him, as well as for having told me of his safety, and thereby taken a great weight off my mind.

Rachel's voice called me into the kitchen, and for two or three hours I had to work hard. We prepared the tasty viands for our master's table and the meagre soup, made from peas of indifferent quality, to be set before the prisoners. Lady Hopton took good care that it should not be too rich or highly flavoured; it was not good, she said, for those in captivity, besides they ought to eat their bread with ashes, especially the obdurate Papists, who were in the gall of bitterness and the bond of iniquity.

At length eleven o'clock sounded from the belfry, and Rachel told me it was time to take the prisoner's dinner to them. My heart beat fast, as we began our round of the cells in the inner part of the fortress; the prisoners confined in the towers which formed part of the walls were served by others. We crossed the green to the Cold Harbour, and after filling the basins of the women on the ground floor, we ascended by a narrow winding stairs constructed in the thickness of the wall to the upper story.

What a sight met my eyes when Rachel turned the key in the lock, and we entered through the low door into the dungeon! On a heap of rotten straw, whence arose an intolerable stench, I beheld two

figures clad in rags. One seemed to sleep, and lay moaning as if in troubled dream; the other, putting aside her snow white hair that hung about her wrinkled, pallid face, shaded her sunken eyes with a trembling hand, and peered at me through the gloom. It was my dear, good grandmother! I should not have recognized her if I had not known that she was here, and heard the familiar tones of her voice, as with her own gentle manner, she greeted my companion, and asked who she had brought with her.

"Ruth Forster, our new maidservant," Rachel replied. "We shall see how long she can put up with the she-dragon, our mistress. How are you to-day, Mistress Bellamy, and how is your daughter?"

"It is well with me and my poor granddaughter," was the reply, "for it is with us as God wills, and as he has foreknown from all eternity, and ordained for our eternal welfare. Anne is quieter, she is almost always asleep, like a child. God in His mercy has cast a veil over her mental vision, thus she is insensible to earthly woe. She fancies herself at Woxindon, and talks about the wonderful plant that blossomed there this spring, and in the summer bore five blood-red berries. I told you about it the other day. So that is your new maidservant? Come hither, girl, if you do not shrink from an old woman, and let me see your face, as well as I can in the this prison twilight."

A slight cry which would not be altogether suppressed, escaped my lips, as I stepped forward, and taking my grandmother's hand, kissed it ten-

derly. I sank on my knees, hardly able to contain myself; Rachel thought I was fainting. "I told you, you had better remain outside, it takes time to get accustomed to the stench of these dungeons," she exclaimed, and taking some water from a stone pitcher that stood by, she sprinkled it on my temples. I sprang to my feet, and once more raised my grandmother's hand to my lips. I then perceived what I had not noticed before, that her right arm was fettered, and fastened by a thick chain to a ring that ran on an iron rod reaching from one wall to the other behind the bed. "Is it possible," I cried, "that any one can treat an old woman of eighty in this wise!"

My grandmother smiled, and said: "These fetters will not hold me long. You seem to have a kind heart; may God bless you in time and in eternity!" and she made the sign of the cross on my forehead. I looked sorrowfully at my sister, who lay with averted countenance on the bed, and she added: "Do not disturb poor Anne, she is asleep." She pressed my hand, and I went away, fearing to awaken suspicion in Rachel's mind. As we descended the spiral staircase, she did in fact say; "You are far too soft-hearted for a maid in the Tower. Or perhaps you knew the Bellamys before?" Thereupon I replied that such a sight, even in the case of a perfect stranger, was enough to move anynone, and she did not gainsay me.

Towards evening I contrived to ask the old skipper whether he could procure me an interview with Father Crichton, or, to speak plainly, an opportunity to approach the Sacraments and hear

mass, for he knew I was a Catholic. He said it was always a venturesome thing to do, but often the Catholic prisoners came out of their several cells, and met in one where mass could be most conveniently said. The golden key was omnipotent. He thought that very night, between two and three in the morning, they were to meet for that purpose in the Beauchamp tower, where the Earl of Arundel was confined, and if I was not afraid, he would conduct me thither. I assented joyfully; and he showed me a ladder whereby I might climb down out of a loft to which I could obtain access from my room. If I had the courage to do that, he would await me in the stable below at two o'clock precisely. I said, I would trust to my guardian angel to keep me from missing the ladder in the darkness, or taking a false step, and so the matter was agreed upon. I wanted to persuade him to bring my uncle Remy and poor Babington as well, but although I offered him a large bribe, he would not hear of it. It was quite impossible, he said, for they were heavily ironed, and the key of their fetters was in the Lord Lieutenant's safe keeping. However he promised to take the priest to them before their execution, which was now certain, and with this I had to be content.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

My wife finds an unexpected source of consolation open when in the Tower. She visits some of the prisoners; and acquaints the reader with the sad fate of Babington and his friends.

The following night was a wakeful one for me, so fearful was I of missing the appointed hour. The prisoner to whose cell I was to be conducted, was one of the most distinguished of English peers, in whose fate I was deeply interested. Philip Howard, Earl of Arundel, had two years previously been received into the Church by our friend, Father Weston. In order to live in accordance with his creed, he had resigned the highest posts at Elizabeth's Court, intending to go abroad. Betrayed by the captain of the vessel on which he took his passage, and brought back to London in custody, he was, by the Queen's command, without even the semblance of judicial inquiry or sentence, imprisoned in the Beauchamp tower. There he languished for ten years, and died the death of a confessor, or rather of a martyr, for poison was mixed with his food. At the time of which I am speaking he had been about a year in prison, and was leading the life of an ascetic; increasing, as far as his outer man was concerned, the sufferings of incarceration, but alleviating them in regard to his inner man, by almost unbroken prayer and meditation, by strict fasts and voluntary acts of penance. We had heard much that was edifying from his confessor, Father Weston, of this man,

who for Christ's sake joyfully bore separation from wife and children; and I rejoiced at the prospect of seeing one whose example I should do well to follow.

At last the clock struck two. Noiselessly I crept through the loft, feeling in the dark for the ladder. My guardian angel guided me to it. Not without trepidation did I set my feet on the rungs, and begin to descend into unknown depths. Before I reached the bottom, Bill Bell opened the door, and a ray of moonlight fell across the floor. We stole along the side of the Lieutenant's house, and along the foot of the wall connecting the Bell tower with the Beauchamp, taking care to keep within the shadow they cast, for all around the moonlight shone clear as day on tower and turret. Within the vast fortress, whose precincts enclosed many a sad and brokenhearted sufferer, perfect silence reigned, broken only by the tramp of the sentry on the ramparts; hearing which, we crept closer to the wall, to elude observation. At length the Beauchamp tower was gained; the gate was ajar; a few steps further and we passed through a massive oaken door into a spacious apartment, wherein numerous state prisoners, some guilty, some guiltless, and several martyrs too, had been confined.

On entering, I saw several prisoners there, kneeling on the flag-stones. A small table was placed before the hearth, to serve as an altar, a crucifix and candles stood on the mantle-shelf. Behind them I could discern the words which the noble Earl had carved in the stone:

Quanto plus afflictionis pro Christo in hoc saecula,
Tanto plus gloriae cum Christo in futuro.

I knelt down quietly in a corner of the cell, and in a few minutes the priest came in, a man still young, and very pale, whose office was not to be known by his clothes, which were of a grey colour, but by the respect wherewith Lord Arundel greeted him. Father Crichton (for it was he) knelt for a brief space in prayer; then, in purposely low tones, he addressed to those present a brief exhortation, saying in a few short sentences much that was encouraging and consoling about the royal road of the Cross, which the Son of God points out to us as the path to Heaven. This done, he seated himself on a chair in one corner, and heard Arundel's confession, as well as that of one or two others. I expected as much, and had prepared myself; accordingly I went up and made my confession. At the close I asked the priest, whom I told who I was, whether he could give me any comfort about my relatives. He told me of Uncle Barty's happy death, and said Uncle Remy and my grandmother rejoiced to suffer imprisonment and perhaps death for a deed of charity. Nor was I to grieve over Anne's lot; in a lucid interval she had made her confession, and now the Divine physician, who apportions to each his measure of suffering, had caused sleep to fall on her mental faculties. Finally he warned me that I must use great circumspection, and counselled me to supernaturalize by the love of God the hard service I had undertaken for love of my kinsfolk.

Immediately afterwards he vested, and said mass. Lord Arundel served, and we all received Holy Communion. Aptly is that celestial food

called the bread of the strong; the solace and strength I derived from it was great indeed. I do not think I could have borne for a single week the vexations to which my mistress subjected me, had it not been for the support afforded by this holy sacrament, and the mass at which I assisted almost every week, either in the Beauchamp or some other tower. Thus even in the prison-house, when at times my burden seemed too heavy to be borne, a source of spiritual consolation was still open to me.

The next time that I went with Rachel to carry the prisoner's dinner to the Cold Harbour, we found, to her surprise and my joy, a great change in their circumstances. The cell had been cleansed, a wooden bedstead and mattress substituted for the foul heap of straw, and even a small table and two chairs were placed before it. My dear grandmother was sitting at the table with her back against the wall; she rose and came to meet us, as far, that is as her chain permitted, saying to Rachel, "see, what influence and the kindness of friends can do for one. We are really too well accommodated for this place. May God reward a thousandfold those who have befriended us!" And then she looked at me in such a loving manner, that I felt amply rewarded for all that I had done. Thus I daily had an opportunity of hearing a word of consolation and encouragement from my grandmother's lips; as for my poor sister she never spoke to me, but remained in the same imbecile condition.

My feast, the Nativity of our Lady, came and went; I heard that Walsingham's nephew was now an inmate of the Tower, that Windsor was

still in hiding in the skipper's house at St. Catharine's wharf, and that it was thought that the Queen of Scots would be put to death.

Then came the day when Babington and his friends were arraigned before a Court of Justice appointed by the Queen. It was the 14th of September, the Exaltation of the Holy Cross. We watched the barge with the accused as it passed beneath the broad arch of the bridge at St. Thomas' tower, to go out through the Traitor's gate down to Westminster. John Ballard, the priest, my unhappy brother-in-law Anthony Babington, besides Salisbury, Barnewell, Donne and Tichbourne were there; also John Savage, whom I had never seen before. He had been arraigned on the preceding day, but sentence had not been passed on him. Heavily ironed, they sat, surrounded by men-at-arms, in the centre of the boat, which moved slowly onwards, keeping close to the banks, in order that the crowds of spectators who had assembled there, might stare at them and revile them at their pleasure. The prisoners remained unmoved amid the insults of the populace. I was told that they all pleaded guilty of having conspired to set Mary Stuart at liberty, and of not having given information of Parma's design to land foreign troops in England; but they positively denied having plotted against Elizabeth's life. Savage alone owned to this; he said a certain Gilbert Gifford, formerly professor of philosophy at Rheims, persuaded him that the assassination of the Queen was a lawful and meritorious act. Nor could Babington deny having been privy to Savage's murderous design.

The noblest answer was that of Ballard: he admitted that he "'practised the Queen of Scots' deliverance, and went about to alter the religion,'' but that he had intended to kill the Queen he would not admit. All the others made a similar statement. But it was of no use; according to the criminal law they had incurred the dreadful penalty of high treason, and judgment was given to that effect. And yet, I heard Sir Owen Hopton say at table, those who were present were not satisfied with the proceedings; all hoped that evidence would be adduced that Mary Stuart was a party to, and had sanctioned the proposal to assassinate Elizabeth, in fact that the conspirators would be compelled to bear public witness against her. But neither in the accusation nor during the trial, was mention made of the alleged complicity of the Queen of Scots; and many were heard to say, as they left the Star Chamber, that the general opinion in that respect appeared to be an incorrect one.

On the following day all the other accomplices, all, that is, who aided and abetted Babington or his friends in their flight, were likewise conducted by water to Westminster, to hear sentence passed on them. I shall hardly be believed when I say that my aged grandmother was arraigned with the rest. But the clerk of the Court happened to have inadvertently given her a wrong christian name, and on this account the Lieutenant allowed her to remain behind. Of the seven men, Uncle Remy was the only one who was not a stranger to me. I was shocked when I saw him; accustomed as he was to an active life in the open air, the close

atmosphere of the prison had pulled him down sadly. He acknowledged that he had supplied Babington and his friends with provisions. His defence was characteristic of the man. "I am a Catholic," he said, "and I do not think St. Peter will shut the gate of Heaven against me, when I tell him my fellow countrymen sent me to the gallows for having fed the hungry and given drink to the thirsty, as our Lord commands." When condemned with the others to death for high treason, he said not a word.

A few days later, Bill Bell came to me, and asked if I would accompany him, the following night, to the cell were Tichbourne was confined. The unfortunate young man was, he said, extremely desirous to send a farewell letter to comfort his young wife, who was sick in Hampshire, but he could not hold a pen, his wrist having been completely dislocated on the rack. After a few moments I consented, considering that it was a work of charity to console the afflicted, trusting to my guardian angel to preserve me from harm. Accordingly that night, before the moon was up, I went with the old boatman to the Develin tower, which was situated at the north-west corner of the inner enclosure. We had to pass the quarters of the musketeers, and I was terribly afraid of the guard. But Bell steered our course so wisely that we escaped their notice. When we got to the church of St. Peter *ad vincula*, we stood up close to the wall, until the sentry had turned, and we heard his steps retreating in the opposite direction. Then we stole on to the Develin tower; the warder was

waiting to admit us into the dark dungeon where poor Tichbourne was crouching on a bundle of straw.

"Whom have you brought?" he asked my companion, starting up as we entered. "I said I wanted a notary."

The man explained that in the Tower one must have whom one could get; besides he was bringing an old acquaintance. He turned his lantern on my face, and Tichbourne recognized me at once. In a few words I told him how I came there; he was greatly touched, and listened to my expressions of sympathy with tears in his eyes. Then he kissed my hand, and declared his readiness to forgive all who had brought these misfortunes upon him, primarily Babington; also Walsingham, to whose intrigues he attributed the connection of their plot with Savage's design, his judges, and the cruel Queen, who had commanded the frightful sentence to be carried out with the utmost severity. He also said that he accepted this violent death in expiation of his sins.

I laid the paper which I had brought with me on a wooden stool, to serve as a table, and kneeling before it, I wrote from his dictation a wonderfully beautiful letter to his poor young wife. In touching words he begged her forgiveness. His zeal for the Catholic cause, his compassion for the innocent Queen of Scots, his attachment to his friends, had brought him to this pass. He had to choose between betraying his associates or giving himself up to the hangman, and the latter seemed to him the most honourable alternative. That thought must be his and her consolation. The manner of

his death would be no disgrace because so many priests had drunk the same chalice, and thereby cast a halo round the shameful gibbet. He died, like many of his noble ancestors, for a chivalrous cause, the rescue of the innocent, and the promotion of religion; so at least he thought, when he engaged in the enterprise. It had turned out otherwise; but God and all good men would look to the intention, not the result. Finally he exhorted her to find true solace in God, and concluded with the hope of an eternal reunion hereafter.

I read over to him what I had written, and he attempted to sign it. An illegible scrawl was all that he could achieve. "Mr. Topcliffe with his rack is a bad writing-master," he said, as he handed me back the pen with a sorrowful smile. Then he begged me to write down some verses that he had composed since he was sentenced. They are very melancholy, and show how much it cost him to give up his life; yet I liked them so much that I asked if I might keep a copy of them, in reward for my services as amanuensis. He consented willingly, and asked me to pray for him on the day of execution, and afterwards for the repose of his soul. The following are the verses he dictated:

My prime of youth is but a frost of cares;
  My feast of joy is but a dish of pain;
My crop of corn is but a field of tears;
  And all my goods is but vain hope of gain;
The day is fled, and yet I saw no sun:
And now I live, and now my life is done!

My spring is past, and yet it hath not sprung;
  The fruit is dead, and yet the leaves are green;
My youth is past, and yet I am but young;
  I saw the world, and yet I was not seen;
My thread is cut, and yet it is not spun:
And now I live, and now my life is done!

I sought for death and found it in the wombe;
I lookt for life and yet it was a shade;
I trade the ground and knew it was my tombe,
And now I dye, and now I am but made.
The glass is full, and yet my glass is run —
And now I live, and now my life is done! [1])

Bill Bell warned me that it was time to depart, if I wanted to look in on my uncle, who was confined in the same tower. So I bade farewell to Tichbourne, whom I was never to see again on earth, and followed my companion into another cell. I only stayed a moment with uncle Remy, and we said but few words to one another. "Is that you, Mary," he said, when he recognized me, rubbing his eyes, as if to rouse himself from sleep, but I saw he wanted to conceal the tears that filled them. "It is too bad of you, to come and wake me out of my first sleep." Then the strong man broke down, and sobbed like a child. He clasped me to his heart, caressing me, and saying: "What an old blockhead I am! Now go, child, and do not trouble yourself any more about me, except to pray for me. Barty is already in heaven, and he will help me to follow him. Give my love to mother and poor Anne." He turned his face to the wall and made me a sign to go. In that manner we parted.

On Tuesday, the 20th of September, A. D. 1586, the first half of the condemned conspirators were executed. It was a warm autumn morning. A great number of bailiffs and men-at-arms accompanied the mournful procession which was formed under our windows. Three hurdles were brought, and at 9 o'clock precisely the accused were led

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[1]) Disraeli, Curiosities of Literature, ii, 195.

out and bound on them. Sir Owen Hopton gave the signal, and they were set in motion. On the first hurdle were Ballard, Babington and Savage, the supposed ring-leaders of the plot; next came Tichbourne and Barnewell, while two of their friends, strangers to me, Tilney and Abingdon, brought up the rear. The men appeared to be tranquil and self-possessed; as the hurdles disappeared beneath the gateway of the Bloody tower, I caught the sound of the *Miserere*, which Ballard began. They were dragged, as I heard to my disgust, all the way through the town to St. Giles-in-the-Fields, where they used to meet to concoct their plan for Mary Stuart's deliverance. There, under the spreading oaks, were the gallows and scaffold erected. Bravely they went to their death. Ballard again declared that all he had done was done in good faith and for the sake of religion, and never had he conspired against the Queen's life. Babington said the same; he acknowledged his error, and implored forgiveness. Tichbourne spoke at greater length. He depicted his happy youth, when he wanted nothing he could wish for, and said nothing was further from his mind than a conspiracy against the Queen. He was the victim of regard for his friend. He was descended of a house that had existed for 200 years before the conquest, and whose members were never stained with crime. Tilney declared that he was a true Catholic; upon which he was interrupted by the Protestant minister, a Dr. White, who was present. Tilney replied: "I came hither to die, Doctor, not to dispute," and desired to be troubled

with no more questions. Then they fell to prayers, and I believe Ballard gave his companions the last absolution. The dreadful execution followed, over the details of which we must pass, only remarking, that by the express orders of the Queen, they were put to death with studied cruelty, their sufferings being protracted to the uttermost. Ballard was executed first; he was disembowelled while yet alive, and fully conscious. Babington followed; his youth and elegance made a great impression on the spectators. In the midst of his agonizing torments he cried several times aloud in latin: *Parce mihi, Domine Jesu!* In like manner all the others were put to death in their turn.

The horrid scene, together with the patience of the victims, had excited the disgust and pity of the bystanders to such a pitch, that when, on the following day, my uncle Remy and the rest were to be executed, this was done with less cruelty, for fear of an uprising of the people. They were therefore not cut to pieces until after death.

At length these terrible days were ended. The victims had been sacrificed, and I thanked God that it was all over. I had now only to think of the two sick prisoners in the Cold Harbour, and it seemed probable that through the mercy of God their sufferings would, ere long, be terminated also.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

St. Barbe is consigned to the Tower; he hears of Mary Stuart's beheadal; and shortly afterwards is set at liberty by his uncle.

I had been kept a close prisoner in Walsingham's house for a fortnight, when he came to me one morning, and talked quite kindly to me at first; presently, however, he asked me if I had not yet come to a better mind. Quietly and firmly I replied that I could not do better than follow my conscience, even if by so doing I destroyed my earthly prospects. Thereupon he rose up and said: "Very well. As you please. To the Tower you will go this very evening." With these words he left me.

When darkness had closed in, old Gray came in. Placing upon the table a link that he carried, he began: "Mr. St. Barbe, his Excellency the Secretary of State desires me to ask whether what you said this morning is your final decision. Upon my giving an answer in the affirmative, he shook his gray head, and besought me to have pity on my youth. "It is useless to swim against the current. Your evidence will not be taken against that of the Secretary of State; the proofs are destroyed. Look at those two secretaries, Nau and Curle; they began by protesting they would rather die than be faithless to their gracious mistress. Now they have gradually taken down their pride, for fear of prison and rack they have already asserted that the letter shown them by Walsingham

appears to be genuine, or is at any rate the same in its main features as the original. Some further revelations to their mistress' disadvantage may presently be expected from them. What would you have! Life is sweet and the rack very bitter. Another thing, young sir; you cannot possibly save Mary Stuart, you will only ruin yourself and bring your uncle into disgrace with the Queen. And let one who has known you from a boy tell you in confidence, your uncle's monetary affairs are in a bad state. You know how parsimonious the Queen is in regard to grants of money for political purposes, lavish as she is in her expenditure on dress. Consequently Walsingham has been compelled to pay the hundreds of spies he employs in Paris, Madrid, Rome, and even in the seminaries and convents, to a great extent out of his private means. This last conspiracy, the progress of which he has watched by means of his emissaries, and utilized to his own ends, has cost him a mint of money. Unless he gets some gift from the Queen, he is undone. He means to ask her Majesty to bestow Babington's estate, which is said to be the finest property in Derbyshire, on you; and he will probably get it, because he ascribed to you the principal part in the disclosure of the conspiracy. You already stand high in the favour of the Queen, whom God preserve! She has twice sent a messenger to inquire after your well-being; each time your uncle had to answer that you were still suffering from the fever you had contracted in her Majesty's service."

"The next report will be that I am dead and buried," I rejoined. "It will be true; for once the

gates of the Tower are closed on me, I shall be dead and buried as far as this world goes. You mean kindly, and I thank you for your good intentions; but I would rather be buried alive than incur the guilt of innocent blood. I am sorry that my uncle should get into trouble on my account, but we all know ingratitude is the wordling's reward."

Thereupon Gray drew a paper from his doublet, and laying his hand on my arm, said: "I arrest you in the Queen's name by order of the Secretary of State."

I followed him without resistance. At the door of the house two armed men placed themselves on either side of me, and we passed through the narrow alleys to the riverside, where a boat was waiting. We soon reached the Tower, on whose turrets and battlements the calm moonlight rested. Once more I looked up at the glorious moon and the star-lit firmament; once more I inhaled the cool night air, as a light wind from the sea fanned my temples; once more I heard the sounds of mirth and music wafted on the breeze from the southward side. "A few moments," I said to myself, "and you will be cast into God knows what underground dungeon, never again to behold the clear sky, to breathe the fresh air, or hear the sound of merry laughter!"

Passing the King's stairs and the Traitor's gate, we stopped at a landing place opposite the Cradle tower, the so-called Tower docks, a narrow embankment between the river on the one side and the moat of the fortress on the other. As we stepped out of the boat, Gray, who sat beside me

without speaking, laid his hand on my arm, and said: "One word and we go back!" I shook my head; the narrow drawbridge over the moat was let down. A man came forward from the shadow of the gateway to meet us. It was the Lieutenant of the Tower; he conducted me in silence into the interior of the fortress, past the Bloody tower, where a sentry challenged us, and across the green to the Bell tower, where he unlocked the door of a prison, which was, I thought, to be my abode for an unlimited time, probably until the day of my death.

This cell I recognized at the first glance as the one wherein, in Henry VIII's reign, John Fisher, the Bishop of Rochester, was confined. He, with the learned Chancellor Thomas More, and a few Carthusian monks, had the courage to adhere to the old faith, and refuse to acknowledge the Royal Supremacy. The dungeon in question is a vaulted apartment not more than five feet square, occupying the upper story of the round tower. The walls are of enormous thickness; several loophole-like windows look onto the Thames, onto the Byeward tower opposite, or across the broad moat to the heights of Tower hill. Before a clumsy chimney-place some bundles of straw were piled to form a bed; the floor was composed of rough paving stones. It was considered one of the best cells in the Tower, yet I shivered when I thought of spending the winter, aye, many a winter too, within its damp, cold walls. Only the remembrance of the holy Bishop, an old man of 75 years, who half a century before, had inhabited and sancti-

fied by his presence this dismal place, inspired me with courage and resolution.

Now began for me the monotonous, miserable life of a prisoner, for which the confinement in my uncle's house had but poorly prepared me. There I could sit comfortably at the window, and watch the coming and going in the street below. Here the windows were so high that it was all I could do to lay hold of the iron bars and pull myself up for a moment to catch a glimpse of the river or of Tower hill. Hour after hour I paced up and down, to and fro in the narrow space between the walls of my cell. Then I would throw myself upon my couch of straw to rest, and resume after a while my weary march. Thus day after day, and week after week went by. The autumn passed and winter came, with its short days and long nights, when rough winds raged round the Tower, and drove cold rain or whirling snow through the crevices of the ill-fitting casements; or an icy fog rose from the Thames, and enveloped tower and tenement in a damp, white shroud. The joyous feast of Christmas passed, the remembrance of which made my captivity more intolerable, and the New Year followed with a frost so sharp that the water in my pitcher froze, and I could only quench my thirst with lumps of ice which melted in my mouth.

And how were my thoughts occupied during all these days, one of which exactly resembled the other, and during the long, dreary nights, when the cold prevented one from sleeping? I had leisure to think of my past life, and repent

of my disloyal resistance to the known truth. Yes, I had indeed been disloyal. A long time ago in Richmond Park I had acknowledged to myself, that the Church of Christ could never depart from the doctrines of her founder, and Campion's book had strengthened that persuasion. All that I had seen since, the example of the martyred priests; the much-enduring Queen, her innocence, her gentleness and her angelic patience; the heroic courage displayed by Miss Cecil, in giving up all for conscience's sake; Windsor's noble behaviour and christian forgiveness; all this, in contrast to the conduct of Elizabeth and her ministers, the vile forgery committed by Walsingham—all this had served to confirm my conviction. I now saw how worthless were the arguments wherewith I had sought to combat them, how wilfully I had shut my eyes to the truth, how I had persuaded myself that I was not bound to join the old, proscribed religion, or at least that I might defer giving in my adhesion to it until a more favourable occasion. I remembered the words of Scripture: "I called, and you refused," and the awful threat that follows those words. I felt truly contrite for my sins, besought mercy from God, and accepted my imprisonment as a just chastisement. Such were my meditations throughout the days and nights of that terrible winter.

The old man, Bill Bell, who brought me my food, used often to stay and talk with me awhile. I spoke to him about the old and about the new religion, and soon discovered that he had remained a Catholic at heart, albeit, like thousands of his fellow-

countrymen, he had yielded to the pressure of persecution, hoping that in time the old religion would be re-established. I tried to set before him the obligation of making profession publicly of his belief, and declared my own readiness to do so, provided an opportunity presented itself. He then told me of Father Crichton, and of the services held by night in the Earl of Arundel's cell, in the Beauchamp tower, which was connected with the Bell tower by what was called *the prisoner's way*. On my expressing an earnest desire to have an interview with Fr. Crichton, and to assist at the service, Bill Bell said he would mention it to Miss Bellamy, of whose self-sacrificing charity he had already spoken to me. Without a bribe the warder of the Beauchamp would not leave the door open leading to the walk along the ramparts; he hoped Miss Bellamy would give what was required, for he knew I had not so much as a groat in my possession.

This conversation took place towards the end of January. A few days later Bill remarked to me that the morrow was Candlemas Day, and it was quite possible that he might forget to lock my door that evening. If I chose, I might see, about 3 o'clock in the morning, whether the small door of the Beauchamp tower was left ajar, for on a feast of Our Lady, Lord Arundel was almost certain to have mass in the prison. All day long I prayed that this plan might succeed, and all the night I watched anxiously for the clock to strike three. Never did the time appear as long. Before the last stroke of the bell had died away, I left my cell, and

felt my way along the dark corridor. It was a stormy night; snow and frozen rain beat over the ramparts, as I crept along beneath them. All at once I heard footsteps behind me; I gave myself up for lost, as there was no means of turning aside. But I perceived the figure following me to be that of a woman, and I conjectured aright that it was none other than Miss Bellamy, to whom I was indebted for this opportunity of hearing mass. I attempted to thank her, but she stopped me, saying, for the man who saved Windsor's life, she would do much more. Then I remembered she was Windsor's betrothed, and that she had helped Miss Cecil to leave the country. I would willingly have said a few words more, but she reminded me that it was neither the time nor the place for conversation, and only asked me to pray for her sister, who had died not many hours before.

In Arundel's cell all was ready for mass. I knelt down amongst the few persons present, and followed the great act of worship with faith and devotion. What a mystery of faith, that the Almighthy Creator of heaven and earth should descend into this poor prison under the form of bread! What a mystery of love, that He should accomplish this marvel of divine omnipotence! A mystery worthy of a religion founded by God Himself, at which my heart rejoiced and yet trembled. The short address Fr. Crichton delivered on the festival of the day, struck me forcibly also. The idea of sacrifice as the root of all that is good and profitable to the soul, sank deep into my mind. After mass I spoke to Father Crichton, telling him who I

was, how unfaithful I had been to grace, and how greatly I desired to return to the fold of the one true Church, founded by Christ Himself. He was extremely kind, and accompanied me to my cell, where he heard my confession and gave me absolution. As he spoke the words of pardon, tears of contrition and repentance streamed from my eyes, and unspeakable peace took possession of my heart.

How happy I then felt! I thought I should be content to spend the remainder of my days in the dungeons of the Tower. What was earthly suffering to one who was a child of God, an heir of the kingdom of heaven?

About a week later, as it was getting dark one evening, I heard shouts of joy in the direction of Tower Hill, and saw the red glare of a great fire. I raised myself by laying hold of the iron bars of the grating before the window sufficiently to see a multitude of citizens dancing around a bonfire as if intoxicated with delight; they gave cheers for Elizabeth, the valiant Judith, who had beheaded the female Holophernes. I guessed at once what this rejoicing meant, for I had been told that in the foregoing October Mary Stuart was condemned to death by the Star Chamber at Westminster. I will give a brief account of the unjust and iniquitous proceedings against this guiltless Queen. [1])

When she was brought back to Chartley, the chair of state and canopy had been removed from her apartments and Sir Amias Paulet, that stern

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[1]) Cf. Hosack, vol. ii, pp. 409—432.

Puritan, began to treat her like a common criminal. She bore this with truly regal dignity. She was subsequently conveyed to Fotheringhay, because there was not a hall at Chartley of sufficient dimensions for the Court of Delegates before whom she was to be brought. At first she refused, in virtue of her privileges as a Queen, to appear before the thirty-six judges who were to find her guilty of participation in the plot to murder Elizabeth; but Sir Christopher Hatton overcame her scruples, on the ground that if she refused to plead, the world would attribute her obstinacy to consciousness of guilt. Without counsel or defence she finally appeared before the tribunal, composed of her deadly enemies. The whole question turned upon the authenticity of the letter to Babington which Walsingham laid before the tribunal. Had I been there, and had I been able to produce the documents my uncle had the meanness to destroy, the whole charge would have fallen to the ground. She could do nothing but declare the letter to be a forgery, and refer to the original draft in her own hand, which was among her papers. She was told this draft could not be found, and that her secretary Curle had asserted that it had been burnt by her orders. She demanded to be confronted with the witnesses, but this was not permitted to her. Turning to Walsingham, she observed that it was an easy matter to counterfeit ciphers; and Walsingham could only call God to witness that in his private capacity he had done nothing unbefitting an honest man, and as a minister, he had done nothing unworthy of his place.

This happened in the castle at Fotheringhay. The court was afterwards removed to Westminster, where, in defiance of all judicial rule, the proceedings were carried on without the presence of the accused, and finally on the 29th of October, the judges, with the honourable exception of Lord Zouch, passed sentence of death on the Queen of Scots. This judgment was confirmed by both Houses of Parliament, who petitioned the Queen that it might immediately be carried into execution. On the 6th of December it was proclaimed by sound of trumpet in London; the ringing of bells and bonfires announced it to me in my prison then, just as now the shouting on Tower Hill acquainted me with its execution. That same evening when Bell came in, he told me Mary Stuart had been beheaded at Fotheringhay on the 8th of February.

Three days later another surprise was prepared for me. The Lieutenant of the Tower appeared, conducting my uncle, Sir Francis, into my wretched dungeon. Hopton was about to withdraw, but Walsingham, who looked pale and tired, after casting a glance round the inhospitable apartment, requested him to show him some more habitable chamber where he could converse with his nephew. Accordingly the Lieutenant led the way to a room adjoining the Council Chamber, where after kindling some logs upon the hearth he left us alone.

I was astonished to perceive the change that had come over my uncle during the last five months. The poor man had aged greatly, his features were sunken and haggard, and his dress,

richly embroidered with gold, hung about his emaciated form. He seated himself before the fire, and held out his hands to the grateful warmth. For some time he neither looked at nor spoke to me. At length I said: "Are you ill, uncle?"

"Slightly indisposed, not exactly ill," he replied, adding with a bitter laugh: "Such treatment as I have received from our *most gracious* (he emphasized the words) Sovereign, after all the victims I have laid upon her altar, is enough to turn one's blood to gall! Yes, I shall have to lay by awhile, unless she spares me the pains, by sending her physician in ordinary with axe and block, or with rope and knife to cure me. She is quite capable of it, and would do it, if she thought my blood would wash away the stain which the death of her rival has left on her reputation for sanctity! As for Davison, I should not wonder if the poor devil lost his head!"

I scarcely knew what answer to make. "You are reaping what you sowed," I thought within myself, "and you deserve a worse punishment." But he was my uncle, who had done a great deal for me, and had really been fond of me; and as I saw him sitting there looking so wretched and broken down, compassion stirred in my heart, and I sought to comfort him with the hope that the Queen would take him again into favour.

But he motioned to me to be silent, and continued: "She is quite right. She is only acting in accordance with the principles upon which I acted. If political interests require my head to fall, she will send me to the block as ruthlessly as I sent

Mary Stuart. If for reasons of state policy it is advisable that I should rot in the Tower, as many others have been made to do, I shall vanish into one of these vaults. Or if it is preferable that I should perish by the hand of the assassin, as was the case with Northumberland, the dagger or poison will end my days. That would be nothing new in the annals of this country. But in duplicity and hypocrisy "Good Queen Bess" outdoes all her predecessors. At the outset she urged and pressed us to pass the sentence of death, and meanwhile she wrote to the Queen of Scots saying she hoped that her innocence, of which both she and I were firmly convinced, would be made clearly apparent. And when the accused was declared guilty, it was by her Majesty's wish that Parliament petitioned for the execution of the sentence. Nevertheless she replied how loath she was to comply with such a demand, and asked for the prayers of both Houses, that in this momentous matter she might act in accordance with the Spirit of God. At the same time she more than once made us write to Paulet and Drury (the additional keeper) to intimate to them her wish, that they should find some means privately to cut off the life of their prisoner. [1]) Paulet, a stern and unfeeling bigot, hated Mary, because she was a Catholic, yet he refused in emphatic terms to shed her blood without a warrant. And it was well that he did so, for how would Elizabeth have shown her gratitude! Thereupon she became quite sad, and bewailed her lack of trusty friends and servants, since none would

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[1]) Cf. Ibid. v. 2, pp. 441—445.

carry out her injunctions. Then she signed the death-warrant, and delivered it to her private secretary Davison to append the Great Seal, and to trouble her no more about it. That was plain enough. And yet, when official intelligence came from Fotheringhay that the head of England's greatest enemy had fallen, and for 24 hours there were public rejoicings in the city, she made as if she did not know the cause, and gave way to an outburst of grief that consternated her attendants. She declared she had been deceived by her ministers, that she never intended the warrant to be executed, caused Davison to be arrested and cast into the Tower for violating his duty, and drove Burghley and others, who had grown gray in her services and without whom she would never have won the crown, from her presence with a volley of abuse!''

My uncle sat for a short time by the fire in silence; then he resumed in a calmer tone: ''Let us say no more on that subject, for I did not come hither to complain of a woman, from whom nothing better could be expected. My purpose was to bring you a passport to enable you to leave England, while I am still able to grant it. You must choose some other career than that of a diplomat, since for that you are certainly not fitted. No doubt you cursed me in your heart last summer for shutting you up in the Tower, but believe me, I did so in kindness rather than in wrath, for otherwise you would infallibly have been executed for treason. I say this because I do not wish you to misjudge me.''

I began to assure him of my gratitude and affection, but he cut me short, saying: "Another thing, Francis. I wanted to see you a wealthy man, but I have not grown rich in the service of the state; on the contrary, I have lessened my own estate to provide the funds required. As long as I am in office, my creditors will not dare to touch me, and after my death there will not be much for them to seize. I counted upon your marriage with Miss Cecil, and then upon Babington's property; now Miss Cecil is gone, and when I asked the Queen to give you Babington's estate, she had already bestowed it on Sir Walter Raleigh. I can therefore only give you this"—he pushed a purse filled with gold towards me—"for the expenses of your journey. You shall have a letter of recommendation to the extraordinary ambassador Bellievre, who came over in view of preventing the execution of the Queen of Scots, and who is now returning to Paris. You can travel in his suite. Only one condition I must impose: if I restore you to liberty, you must give me your word of honour that you will never during my lifetime, divulge a word regarding the falsification of the letter to Babington."

I promised him this; he shook hands with me, and we parted. I watched the old man as he passed along the narrow corridor, followed by Sir Owen Hopton, whom he had acquainted with the fact of my being set at liberty. On reaching the stairs he turned and looked back at me; it was a last look, for I never saw him again. He died not long after in comparative obscurity, having brought

himself to circumstances of such great poverty that he was buried privately by night, without any funeral solemnity. Catholics saw in this the judgment of God; but it is not for me, his nephew, to say a harsh word of him now that he is dead. I will rather commend his soul to the divine mercy, and conclude my story with the ungarnished statement, that after many years of diligent and important services to the Crown, he died in destitution, a fact greatly to his credit.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

The three narrators meet again, and their story is brought to a happy conclusion.

They say a woman must always have the last word, and therefore, my husband tells me, it is for me, who began this story, to bring it to a conclusion. I will accordingly do so, on condition that he resumes the part of narrator when he is principally concerned in the narrative.

St. Barbe has already mentioned that both my poor sister and my dear grandmother died in the spring of the year A. D. 1587, Anne on Candlemas Eve, grandmother on the night of the 15th Febr. In both cases their end was most edifying, for which I cannot be thankful enough to God. I was able to be with them at the last, thanks to the connivance of my fellow-servant. Anne recovered her reason shortly before her death, begged our forgiveness in a touching manner for the woes she considered herself to have been mainly instrumental in bringing upon us, and accepted her early death with pious resignation. Just at the right time Father Crichton brought her the Viaticum. Soon after her mind wandered again, and she rambled on about the wonderful flower at Woxindon, saying the last branch but one was broken off, and the turn of the other would come soon. Then she pressed our hands, drew a few deep breaths, and all was over. How peaceful she looked as she lay on that wretched pallet! The setting sun cast a warm glow over her marble features, and the

shadow of the iron bars before the window formed a cross on the wall beside her.

My tears fell fast; grandmother did not attempt to check them, but when I began to complain of our sorrowful lot, she gently reproved me, saying: "Child, have you forgotten that beautiful 12th Chapter of the 2nd Book of the 'Imitation of Christ!' What does our adorable Saviour promise to His friends here below? Joy and pleasure, or the cross and suffering? And the nearer His friends are to Him, the more bitter is their portion. To the Apostles He said: You shall drink of my chalice; and he ordained that a sword of sorrow should pierce the heart of His beloved Mother, and she should be crowned Queen of Martyrs. The measure of the sufferings He assigns to us is the measure of the love He bears us. But the suffering will not last long. Now the world rejoices, 'you indeed have sorrow; but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice; and your joy no man shall take from you'. [1]) Let us thank Him therefore for all our afflictions!"

Then she uttered aloud her gratitude and love to God, in words which changed my tears of grief into tears of consolation, and which rose up to Heaven as a sweet canticle of praise and triumph. From that day forth she visibly declined, her life died out like a taper that had been burnt before the altar of God. Her last words were: "In the cross is salvation."

It need scarcely be said that I resolved to leave the Tower as soon as I had closed her eyes, and

[1]) St. John ch. 16, v. 22.

prepared her mortal remains for burial. A scene in which my mistress behaved with unseemly violence, on discovering that I was a Papist, gave excuse for my immediate departure. I did not go forth alone; the old boatman, whose term of detention had expired, accompanied me, as well as St. Barbe, whom his uncle had, on the preceding day, set free, and provided with clothes. And whither, when we reached the Thames and stepped into a boat, did we direct our course, if not to the rickety old house at St. Catharine's wharf, where my dear husband lay in hiding?

I will leave it to him to give an account of our arrival there.

— On the next day but one after St. Valentine's Day, I was sitting at my attic window, looking down upon the Thames, whose turbid waters, rushing and eddying below, almost resembled the horrible river of the infernal regions.

Turbid hic coeno vastaque voragine gurges
Aestuat atque omnem Cocyto eructat arenam!

I sat moody and sorrowful, for to solitude and the misery of compulsory inaction was added the continual dread of detection, which would have been not only death to me, but to the brave lad who had rescued me. This daily apprehension preyed upon my health, and it might have had serious consequences, had I been subjected to such torture much longer. But as I gazed upon the river, lost in gloomy meditation, the pale rays of a wintry sun broke through the fog and fell upon a boat that was steering straight for the house. I

instantly recognized the white-bearded man at the helm for my old friend Bill Bell, and was heartily glad to see that he had regained his liberty. But who were the two persons seated in the middle of the boat, with their backs towards me? The figure of the man seemed a familiar one; and right enough, when he stood up and turned round to look up at the house, I saw it was St. Barbe! What could he want? Ought I to welcome him as a friend or fly from him as an enemy? While I thus doubted, to my astonishment I saw him politely offer his arm to the young woman by his side, an ordinary maidservant, to judge by her dress. But when she looked up, and I saw her dear face and met her bright blue eyes, I should have known her among a thousand! Down I flew, regardless of the shaky ladder and steep, clumsy stairs, into the room below, which she was just entering, and we threw ourselves into each other's arms kissing and hugging one another, laughing and crying for joy.

Presently I turned to St. Barbe, whose presence I had overlooked in the transport of my delight. All was explained in a few words. When he told me he had been received into the Church, I embraced him with fraternal affection. I thanked him for sparing my life, but he would not listen to me, saying he had only paid off an old debt, for he remembered the day when I fished him out of the Trent. Then he spoke of our departure from England, which now offered few difficulties. The passport his uncle had given him was one such as envoys usually have, and in it mention was expressly made of "domestics". In this character

my betrothed and I could safely occompany him. Yet we thought it wiser to act upon Walsingham's suggestion, and travel with the French ambassador. Accordingly St. Barbe went to present himself to M. de Bellievre, taking with him a letter from Mary, in which Mendoza's letter of recommendation was enclosed.

We had much to tell and to hear, and the hours passed rapidly. At nightfall St. Barbe returned, to announce that all was arranged; the ambassador started for Paris the next day but one, and would be happy to take us in his suite. St. Barbe also brought a note from Mme. de Bellievre for my betrothed, inviting her to join her at once at her residence. Thus we parted again, but this time in joyous expectation.

The next day was one of busy preparation. Before sunrise on the day after, we were at St. Paul's stairs, where we went, in the ambassador's suite, on board the vessel that was to transport him and us to France. Still a few anxious moments were in reserve for us. We were about to weigh anchor, when a party of Walsingham's agents — Pooley, I believe, among them — came on board to inspect our papers. They appeared satisfied, however, and after that we had nothing more to fear. Our bark moved slowly down the Thames; once more we saw Bill Bell's old house standing over the water, the turrets and walls of the gloomy Tower, and then London was left behind in the morning mist, while we cautiously made our way between the ships at anchor and the flat banks, till the wind rose, the fog lifted, and with canvas

spread, our ship sped forward like Neptune's chariot, whose wheels scarce touched the crested waves:

Atque rotis summas levibus perlabitur undas!

Finally the French coast and then Paris were happily reached. The meeting was touching between Mary and her brother Frith, who had grown quite a great boy. The poor lad cried when he heard of the death of so many of his relatives; but the good spirits of childhood, and the pleasure of seeing his friends again soon got the upper hand. My betrothed was also delighted to see her friend, Miss Cecil, again. Of St. Barbe's meeting with Burghley's daughter it is not for me to speak, but as he will not say anything, except that she expressed great gladness on hearing that he had become a Catholic, I may as well mention that the wisdom of the old Abbess at Montmartre, in not admitting Miss Cecil as a postulant, was very soon proved. In fact a year later those two, Miss Cecil namely, and St. Barbe, were married on the self-same day, and at the self-same altar, that of our Lady, as ourselves, to wit, Mary Bellamy and myself, Edward Windsor; quietly and joyfully the double wedding was kept. As I am not merely writing a romance, or love story, but recording facts that really occurred, I think it would ill beseem me, to take leave of the reader with the sound of marriage-bells ringing in our ears. I will rather, in order to lay the top stone upon the edifice, or if you will, to add the last flower to the garland, say a few words about the solemn requiem held on the day after our arrival, by order of his Majesty

Henry III, in the cathedral of Notre Dame, for the deceased Queen of Scots.

The vast and magnificent structure was hung throughout with black cloth, festooned beneath the arches, and draped about the columns. In the choir stood a grand catafalque with the escutcheons of France, England, Scotland and Ireland, to the crown of which countries Mary Stuart laid claim. Above these were a sceptre and diadem of gold, sparkling with jewels, while all around tall palm-branches testified that she, like the holy martyrs, had come out victorious from the deadly strife. The bier was surrounded by innumerable wax tapers, some of which were on tall silver candle-sticks, while some were held by officials of high position. The whole Court was present; his most christian Majesty Henry III, the dowager Queen, Catharine of Medici, the Princes and Princesses of royal blood, besides the Duke of Guise, with other illustrious Dukes, and the flower of the French nobility. For these one half of the choir was reserved, the other being occupied by ecclesiastics of the highest rank, the Papal Legate, the Cardinal Archbishop of Paris, a multitude of Bishops and Prelates, Cathedral dignitaries, Doctors of the Sorbonne, and Heads of Religious Houses. The spacious nave of the Cathedral was one mass of people, all dressed in mourning. I was much affected by the sight of the church only, thronged with devout worshippers, lamenting the unjust but glorious death of an illustrious Princess, with whom St. Barbe (who was kneeling at my side) and I had been brought into close contact, and with whose

fortunes our own had, to a great extent, been bound up. But when the subdued, sweet notes of the organ echoed through the lofty aisles, and the choir of the Chapel Royal began to chant the touching strains of the *Libera*, I wept like a child. It seemed to me however, that, on this occasion, this lament and appeal for mercy might be well replaced by the song of joy and triumph which the Church appoints for the commemoration of her martyrs.

The same opinion was expressed by the Bishop of Bourges, Mgr. Renaud de Beaune, who pronounced the panegyric. He declared the victim thus shamefully put to death to be in every sense a martyr. Scarcely a dry eye was to be seen in the assembly when he depicted her death, and described how with majestic composure she ascended the scaffold erected in the great hall at Fotheringhay, and declared in unfaltering tones: "I am by birth a Princess and an anointed Queen, and not amenable to the laws of this country. I am a near relative of the Queen and her rightful heir. It is unjustly that I suffer, but I thank God, that I am permitted to die for my religion. I am wholly innocent of having plotted the death of the Queen, or of having by word or deed, sanctioned any attempt against her person." Then the Bishop went on to tell how the protestant Dean of Peterborough persistently exhorted her at this supreme moment to abandon her religion, and she again and again informed him that she was resolved to die in the faith in which she had lived, answering when counselled to lay aside the crucifix which she carried in her hand, "It is not easy to carry the image in one's hand

without bearing it in one's heart, and nothing befits the Christian on his way to death than to keep before him the image of the Saviour." The audience were filled with pity and admiration as the preacher continued: "She then in the hearing of all present, prayed for the Pope, for the welfare of the Church and of the Christian princes, for her Son, for Queen Elizabeth and for all her enemies. When her ladies in vain attempted to restrain their sobs, she comforted them, saying: "Weep not, but rather rejoice. I am willing to depart out of this world, to die for so good a cause." And with words of prayer upon her lips, she laid her head upon the block, and received the deathstroke. O happy death, O glorious victory! The only crime that could be proved against her, was her adherence to the Catholic Faith.

This, and much else that the Bishop of Bourges said, moved all who heard him to tears. Much more did it affect us who had had personal intercourse with the royal lady of whom he spoke. As we left the Cathedral, St. Barbe said to me: "When Elizabeth's turn comes to die, she will not lay her head down with the same tranquil composure wherewith Mary Stuart laid hers upon the block. I believe her end will be one of black despair!"

My friend's words came true, as is well known. What, I ask you, does it avail the proud Elizabeth now to have been an object of adoration to her subjects? What are crown and sceptre, prison and fetters, axe and block, when weighed on the balance of eternity?

EPILOGUE

Addressed to her Imperial Highness Isabella Clara Eugenia.

And now the somewhat lengthy story of the events of our past lives, commenced last May by your Imperial Highness' command, and continued by us conjointly during the summer, is at last completed, and neatly written out in the book which your Imperial Highness ordered from Brussels for the purpose, I may quote the words of Marus at the close of the second book of the Georgics, and say:

Sed nos immensum spatiis confecimus aequor,
Et iam tempus equûm fumantia solvere colla!

Truly, a wide tract has been traversed, and it is time to loose the yoke from the necks of the steaming horses! And as the traveller, when he reaches his destination, pauses awhile, and looks back at the road he has covered, so we too may look back and thank God for His merciful guidance. Clouds came up, the tempest burst with terrific violence, threatening general destruction, but we were unhurt, and a still evening followed, with a bright rainbow, while light clouds tinged with gold flitted across the sky.

How it has since fared with my dear wife and myself your Imperial Highness knows full well; for our life had been like that of a little bark in a tranquil harbour, from the time we entered your service, and have enjoyed a far larger share of your favour than our poor merits deserve.

St. Barbe also, or rather Brother Anselm, sees in all that has befallen him the gracious hand of

Providence, although he has been led by rougher paths than we have; for God in His wisdom, assigns the heavier cross to the stronger shoulders, and He knows best what each one of us can bear.

Quid valeant humeri, quid ferre recusent.

After a few years of happy married life his beloved Judith and his only child were taken from him. Her death was most edifying; with her last breath she exhorted her husband not to murmur at her loss, but rather to thank Heaven for the happiness they had enjoyed, and above all for the grace of having both been brought into the Church, for whose faithful children death has few terrors. Shortly after St. Barbe took the habit of a humble Capuchin, and found in the Order of the seraphic Saint of Assisi the peace which the world failed to give him.

Frith is equally happy as a member of the Society of Jesus. In accordance with his earnest wish, he has been sent on the dangerous English mission. He has revisited Woxindon, and prayed beside the grave of his parents. The oak beneath which they were laid to rest, is still standing, but the house is in ruins. The property brought no blessing to our Cousin Page, who purchased it by his apostacy. Frith is now labouring as a priest at Preston, in Lancashire, in constant peril, or rather in constant hope, of following in the steps of his brother in religion, Edmund Campion, and receiving, like him, a martyr's crown.

Here, in Tervueren, my wife and I lead a quiet, peaceful life, a life almost too free from trouble for this world. Our two children Remy and Anne,

have married happily, and when they come from the neighbouring town of Brussels to visit us, they now bring our little grandchildren with them. The all-merciful God has indeed dealt bountifully with us, and as I have already said, after the storms we experienced in our youth, He has made us find life's eventide sweet, through the gracious favour your Imperial Highness extends to us. To Him be praise and thanksgiving forever!

To you, illustrious Princess, our kind Patroness, we, the three narrators of this story, *The Wonderful Flower of Woxindon*, venture to offer our book, as an expression of our heartfelt affection, and of the gratitude which, after God, we owe to your Imperial Highness.

THE END.

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